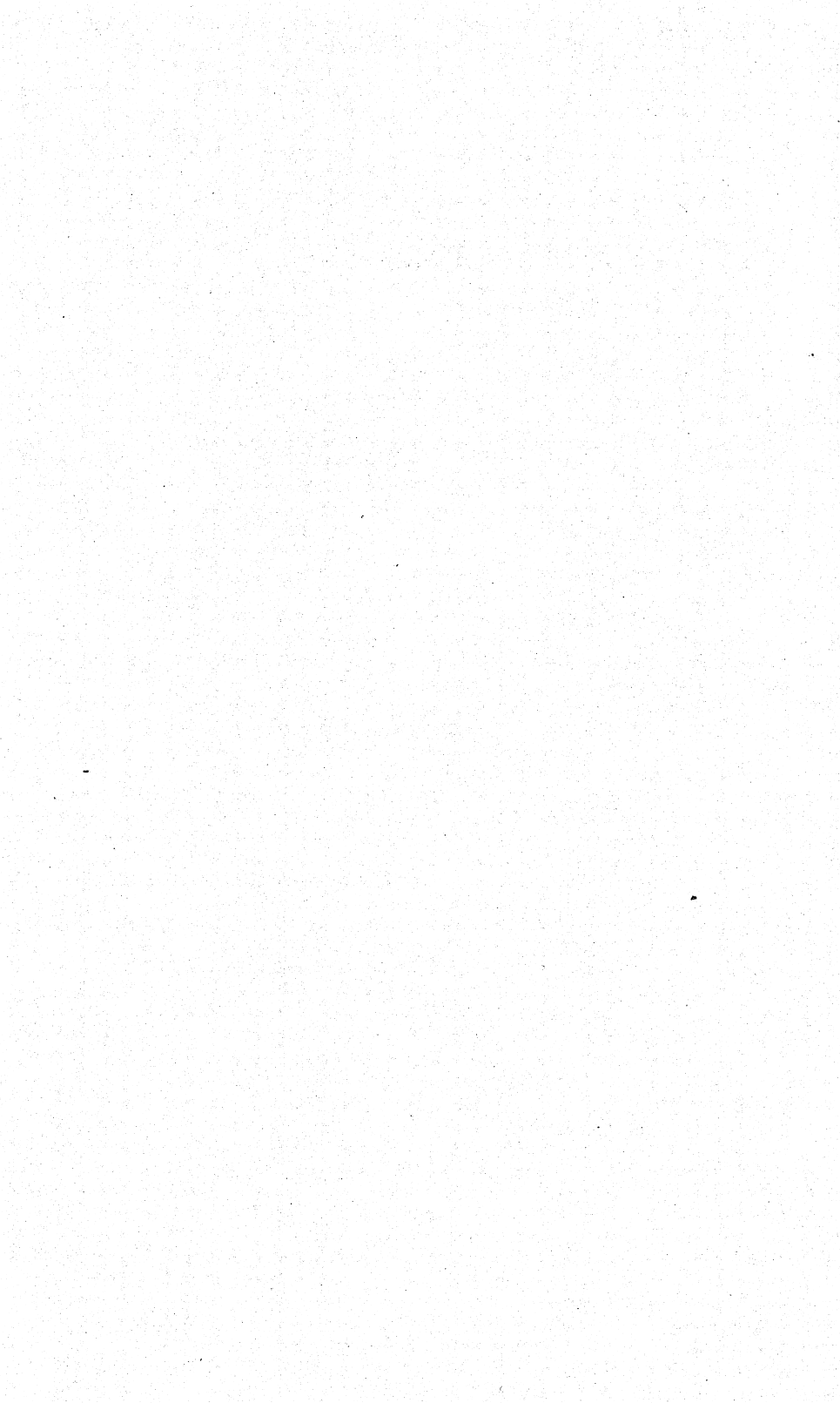




## BRISTOL AT WAR





# *BRISTOL AT WAR*

by

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LONDON

MUSEUM PRESS LIMITED

*First published in Great Britain by  
Museum Press Limited  
26 Old Brompton Road, London, S.W.7  
1962*

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TO THE PEOPLE OF BRISTOL

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT  
THE PITMAN PRESS, BATH  
R.3374



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

EXCEPT in so far as documents are referred to in the text, references have been omitted. If they had all been included, this book would have approximated to what was once the ideal of some scholars, that is, a trickle of text running through vast meadows of footnotes. It seems desirable, therefore, to describe in a short bibliographical note the kind of documentary evidence upon which this book is based.

I have examined the minutes of the Bristol City Council for the period 1934-45 and the annual and other reports presented to that body by local government departments and officials. I am much indebted to the Port of Bristol Authority for so kindly placing its records at my disposal and also to its officers who have been at all times ready to help with their counsel and advice on matters relating to the Port. The minutes of the Emergency Committee and the A.R.P. Committee, together with the reports submitted to them by various sub-committees, yielded much information. The A.R.P. Control War Diary was invaluable. The Lord Mayor's War Services Committee minutes and reports and those of many other *ad hoc* bodies concerned with particular wartime activities have been most useful. Much also was gleaned from the back numbers of the Bristol newspapers down to the first year of the war, but after that date, owing to wartime restrictions, they were of less significance. I have examined such documents relating to Bristol as were available in the Regional Commissioner's Office. The archives of the Ministry of Information, South Western Region, provided me with perhaps the best general view of Bristol at war, while the minutes of the Bristol Information Committee and its various sub-committees, contained much useful information. A mass of letters and other documents produced by various officials and others have also been used. I have interviewed those responsible for the building up of the Home

Guard, the Royal Observer Corps, the W.V.S. and other wartime organizations in this city and examined documents supplied by them. Here it is impossible to mention all the sources consulted, but this sample list may be taken to illustrate the kind of material that has been used in the preparation of this book.

C. M. MACINNES



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the City Council for its generous financial assistance, which has made my investigations possible. I am grateful to the officials of all the bodies that I have consulted and to individuals too numerous to mention by name. I hope, however, that they will accept this collective expression of thanks as none the less sincere. I am indebted to the *Bristol Evening Post*, the *Western Daily Press* and the *Bristol Evening World* who have so kindly allowed me to select the illustrations appearing in this book from their wartime collections of photographs. My thanks are also due to Mr. C. E. Pitman, Mr. Louis Ward, Mr. Eric Buston, Miss M. E. Nichols and my wife, who have assisted me in so many ways.

C. M. MACINNES





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# I

## BRISTOL BETWEEN THE WARS

IN THE middle decades of the nineteenth century, as during the reign of the first Elizabeth, Bristol appeared to languish. The men who might have led her to launch out on new uncharted seas were content to live on the wealth accumulated by the daring of their ancestors and to dream of the great past.

Before the death of Queen Victoria Bristol had shaken off this sloth, and the war which came in 1914 quickened her pulse and invigorated her industries. In the course of that struggle her sons won distinction in every theatre of war, on land, on sea and in the air. The port, which had been taken over by the city, was now efficient and convenient. Thus, at last, the evil reputation which the Avon acquired in the nineteenth century disappeared. Just before the war began a new industry was founded which expanded rapidly in response to wartime needs: this was the aero-industry, whose products, the "Bristol" *Bullet*, the "Bristol" *Fighter* and *Bulldog*, became famous throughout the world. Clearly, therefore, the spirit of enterprise was not dead and Bristolians were as ingenious and daring as their forbears. So, in 1918, the old city was rejuvenated and faced the future with confidence.

But although she had shaken off the lethargy of the nineteenth century, she had far to go if she was ever to regain the position among English cities that was once hers. Indeed her citizens by now had no very strong desire that such an attempt should be made. There was no glory and little advantage that they could see in rivalling industrial towns, whose chief claim to distinction was the size of their populations. Moreover, it was now realized that, without knowing it, Bristol had learned a valuable lesson from the nineteenth century; a lesson which every industrial and trading city of the kingdom was about to be taught. By bitter experience she had discovered the peril of "putting all her eggs in one basket," for when the West Indian

trade collapsed much of her prosperity vanished. In the 'twenties and 'thirties of the present century Great Britain also came to realize that excessive localization of industry might carry with it grave dangers. If in a particular area devoted to one special group of industries that group happened to be stricken by economic adversity the whole community suffered. Bristol by the twentieth century had become a city of widely varied industrial activities, and it thus escaped this danger. It never happened that all her industries were depressed at the same time. Although, between the wars, thousands of Bristolians knew the misery of unemployment, the city as a whole was not classified as a depressed area.

While it is probably true that the typical Bristol working-class family was better off than that of many other towns, this city contained, in 1938, about 40,000 people who lived in poverty. It was estimated by the author of the *Standard of Living in Bristol*, which appeared in that year, that one-fifth of working-class children came from homes that were unable to give them a fair start in life. Unemployment, which occurred in different industries at different times, reached its peak in January 1932, when there were 27,806 people registered as unemployed. After that a revival occurred and, by the close of 1937, the position was completely reversed. It was then stated that there never had been a period in the history of the city when there were so many people at work, and this trend continued down to the outbreak of the war and after.

The aircraft industry illustrated the economic fluctuations of the time. In 1918 about 4000 were employed at Filton. By the early months of 1922 this figure had been reduced to 770. As late as 1934 there were only 2482 on the pay roll, but 9262 in 1936 and 16,860 in December 1938. Although similar ups and downs occurred in other industries they were not so marked. The conclusion of the writer of the *Standard of Living in Bristol* would therefore appear to be true: "There can be little doubt that the Bristol working-classes on the whole are distinctly better off than London and probably all other towns."

Few cities in the kingdom are so rich in charitable foundations. These are worthy memorials of the wealth and humanity of the merchant princes of former times, and in the period between the wars this noble tradition was maintained. The

foundation and endowment of St. Monica's Home added one more, and perhaps the most splendid, to the roll of Bristol's charitable institutions for the relief of distress. But the benefactors of the past did not confine themselves to the care of the old and infirm, for they recognized their responsibility to youth. Several of the great schools they founded are today not only ancient but illustrious in the world of learning. Here again, in the period between the wars, this great civic tradition, which stretches back to Robert Thorne, who founded the Grammar School early in the sixteenth century, was continued.

The University of Bristol received its charter in 1909, but was scarcely on its feet when war broke out five years later. When peace returned it was still small. Its buildings, though good, were too limited for its needs and large sections of the University were housed in shabby huts and converted dwelling houses. But the young University was on the threshold of a great period of expansion in 1919. Thanks mainly to the munificence of the Wills family, the city was adorned by some of the most splendid modern academic buildings to be found in the kingdom, including two students' residences which are models of their kind. The carving and interior decorations in some of the public rooms of the main Arts building proved that Bristol could still produce distinguished artists in wood and stone. Year by year the reputation of the University as a seat of learning grew, and in the H. H. Wills Physics Laboratory were conducted some of the most significant scientific investigations of the age.

While the private munificence of the period exceeded the great benefactions of the past, the civic authorities were not unmindful of their duty. New and better primary schools were built; nursery and various other special schools were established; able young men and women were encouraged by scholarships and grants to proceed to universities or to special professional schools. Year by year the size of the classes in elementary schools was reduced while the number of men and women teachers who possessed full professional qualifications increased. As was fitting in a great industrial city, special attention was paid to technical training and in this department the Society of Merchant Venturers worthily upheld its long tradition of public service. Each winter thousands of young people passed through

its evening classes, where a standard prevailed which the Local Education Authority might hope to equal but could not surpass. In the sphere of adult education the Extra-mural Department of the University and such organizations as the Workers' Educational Association were steadily extending their influence to an ever-widening circle of students.

During these same years the unpalatable truth was made clear that thousands of Bristol citizens were compelled to live in houses unfit for human habitation. Obviously if this state of affairs was allowed to persist all the work of the educationists and of the reformers might be wasted. Far too many houses in the city were old, dirty, unsafe and no longer weatherproof. Bristol knew this and was ashamed of it. Behind many a fine façade of the Georgian period human degradation reigned, and noble stairways, still splendid though defaced, now conducted the visitor to scenes of squalor.

However long it might take, Bristol was determined to put an end to these unhappy conditions. Far-reaching rehousing plans were drawn up, some of which had already been carried into execution when the war broke out in 1939. People from the slums were thus provided with healthy homes in Knowle West, on Bedminster Down, at Sea Mills and Southmead. This outward movement was further helped by the development of the Avonmouth Port area, the rise of the aircraft works at Filton and the departure of Messrs. J. S. Fry and Sons from their old premises in Union Street to their new factories at Somerdale, near Keynsham. Old houses were pulled down and open spaces appeared, upon which new factories or blocks of flats could be built, for the exodus of people and industries was of necessity only partial. But the chain of habit was hard to break and even the most gloomy slums are able to arouse feelings of loyalty in the hearts of those who live in them. To the astonishment of the officials concerned, residents frequently opposed the move, for when new and far better houses were offered to them they still preferred to live in their old unsavoury quarters, even though this, in some instances, now entailed several miles of travel each working day.

In the half-century prior to the Armistice the machine of local government had greatly increased in size and complexity. As this growth had taken place almost imperceptibly no new

civic buildings were constructed and so the accommodation of the various departments became a pressing problem. With his officers scattered throughout the city, the Town Clerk was hard put to it to maintain that constant communication with them that was desirable if an efficient public service was to be preserved. The Council House was far too restricted to accommodate the Lord Mayor and his staff, the Town Clerk, the City Council and its various committees. Therefore, after years of discussion, presentation and rejection of various plans, it was at length decided to erect new municipal buildings fronting on College Green, where the majority of the city's departments could be housed. With the Cathedral and the City Library, together with other buildings that would be erected in time, it was hoped to create a fitting civic centre, but many citizens were disappointed when they discovered that the new buildings were of brick and not of stone.

The increasing volume of traffic during this period created serious transport problems. More room was needed at the Centre and, therefore, it was decided to cover in another section of the Frome. So picturesqueness was sacrificed to efficiency, but when the work was completed the people of Bristol were delighted to find that they could still come suddenly upon ships, as Pope had done two hundred years before, in the middle of a busy city street. Then again, Bristol Bridge became a serious bottleneck. During the rush hours traffic jams occurred and it was clear that an attempt had to be made to solve this problem. A new thoroughfare was therefore built from Temple Meads, past St. Mary Redcliffe, to the river, across which a bridge was thrown. Some houses at the south-eastern and north-western corners of Queen Square were demolished, though not without strong protests, and so a splendid new access to the centre of the city was provided. Other roads were constructed, and the congestion was considerably relieved when the through traffic north and south was diverted to a route which skirted the Downs. Perhaps the most remarkable new road of this period was the Portway. This great thoroughfare, which connects Bristol with her port at Avonmouth, had already, by 1939, more than justified its construction. As it was built along the Avon Gorge, between the river and the cliffs that towered above it, this road was a considerable triumph of engineering. Another

illustration of the change that was now taking place in transport was provided by the rapidity with which the tram disappeared. After much discussion, the whole system was scrapped and the internal-combustion engine won another victory. When war came in 1939 there were only a few tramcars left in Bristol and even they soon vanished.

So, during these twenty years, the face of the old city was changing, but the world at large tended still to regard Bristol as a backwater. Her people at last realized that if her merits were to be appreciated as clearly elsewhere as at home, it would be necessary for them to bestir themselves. Bristol had much to offer to prospective buyers, and surrounded as she is by some of the most beautiful and historic countryside in England she has a great deal with which to attract the tourist. Bristolians at last decided that they had been too prone to assume that others would know about the charms of their city without being told, and they now understood how serious had been their mistake. Less fortunate places that possessed greater awareness of the spirit of the time, or whose people were less squeamish about proclaiming their town's merits, had forged ahead. If Bristol was to be known she must advertise, however distasteful that might be, but she believed it could be done in a civilized and proper manner. Advertisement was not necessarily vulgar, and so a far-sighted group of citizens founded the Development Board. The purpose of this new body was to collect and to disseminate information about Bristol throughout the United Kingdom and foreign countries, to attract new industries and generally to promote her external and material interests.

While, however, Bristol was arraying herself in the garments of modernity, she had no desire to appear as a mere creation of yesterday. She knew that her present was on the whole fortunate, she believed her future was bright, but she did not forget that her past had been glorious. In fact, she may have been somewhat too prone to think of that past; and yet her citizens may be pardoned, if, when extolling the greatness of their town on public occasions, they pass lightly over the dull nineteenth century and range jubilantly back through that long period which stretches from Waterloo to the sailing of the *Matthew* and beyond to the remote Middle Ages. Her past was not made

up solely of feats of daring exploration and commercial triumphs, for Bristol is rich in her cultural traditions. She has always been remarkable for the number and variety of clubs and societies concerned with the arts or in a general way with the development of the aesthetic or intellectual interests of their members. In some of these working-class people formed the majority. Retired soldiers, sailors, Colonial and Indian civil servants made up the membership of others, while in some representatives of every social, economic and political group were to be found. Between the wars clubs rose and fell with surprising rapidity, but many that still survive had already attained to a respectable antiquity in 1918. The artisans of Bristol had for the past century at least produced men and women who took a lively interest in education and in public affairs. It was, for example, in this city that, in the opening years of the nineteenth century, the adult education movement had won some of its earliest triumphs and, for the past hundred years or more, Sunday Lecture Societies and similar bodies had continued to meet regularly week by week. Between the wars this tradition was continued and enriched. In the early 'twenties a repertory theatre was established which survived all its infant ailments and, when war broke out, was still flourishing and healthy. For those whose inclinations, whether political, religious or economic, were more robust and whose methods of expression were less restrained, there were the Sunday evening meetings on the Downs, which for this purpose was Bristol's Hyde Park.

Ardent Cliftonians assert that Clifton can compete with Nether Stowey for the honour of being the cradle of the English Romantic Movement. Be that as it may, it is a fact that Southey was a Bristolian and that both Coleridge and Wordsworth had associations with this city and were familiar figures here at the close of the eighteenth century. Hannah More lived in Bristol, and it was well known to numbers of artists and writers of the nineteenth century. John Addington Symonds was merely one of many distinguished scholars who made their homes here. In 1918 Clifton still retained much of her former splendour. There was a great deal to remind the stranger who passed along her streets and viewed her famous terraces of the rich and cultivated life that had flourished there. Nor was that society by any means



extinct in 1918, for after the Armistice Clifton life continued to flow in its spacious channels. Literary and other groups regularly met to talk about books, to listen to good music, to paint or to discuss works of art. The Clifton dinner party was a true mirror of the nineteenth century and from time to time gatherings took place reminiscent of the routs of a still earlier time. But some of the magnificence was already becoming a little faded and the glory was departing. Old Clifton families increasingly preferred a villa in Stoke Bishop or a home in the country, while the family mansions were turned into flats or allowed to degenerate into tenements. At a later date many of them became government offices.

Although Bristol recognized the need for change she was not to be hurried. If change was to come it must be of her own seeking; it was not for outsiders to tell her what she was to do. When, therefore, national newspaper combines brought sensational journalism and circulation devices to the city, Bristolians were not impressed. Indeed, they were antagonized. After a fierce and costly war between the combine which had bought up one of the city's oldest newspapers and a new evening paper launched by a rival national group, the antagonists came to terms on a nation-wide basis. Bristol found herself, therefore, with one evening paper (the new *Evening World*); one daily (the *Western Daily Press*—which had lost its *Evening News* early in the battle, but now emerged still independent and with the *Times and Mirror*, incorporated in its own title); and one weekly, the *Bristol Observer*.

Local indignation at this attempt to establish an evening paper monopoly made possible the appearance of a new locally financed journal, the *Evening Post*, which, reviving the traditions of the deceased *Times and Echo*, was an immediate success. The war flared up again, but eventually a joint board was formed to control the broad finances of both evening papers and avoid uneconomic competition. This newspaper episode was perhaps the outstanding illustration of the depth and vitality of local loyalty during these years.

History and geography have combined to make Bristol a complex and distinctive community whose charm is heightened by its surprising variety. She is the greatest city in the West Country and her people are predominantly West Country in

character, yet, for upwards of a thousand years, she has attracted the trade and the people of the West Midlands. Despite the barrier of the Severn, she has also been profoundly influenced by South Wales and through her port people have come to her from all parts of the world to trade, to observe and sometimes to settle. Although it may not take seven generations to make a good Bristolian, as is sometimes affirmed, Bristol cannot be wooed in a day. She must be courted with respect. She is a great industrial city but her roots lie deep in the past; yet there is no discord, for she has contrived to harmonize old and new so to produce unity. Bristol is one, but nevertheless she contains a diverse assortment of groups whose combinations and antipathies bewilder the stranger that tries to understand her—Church and Chapel, Catholic and Protestant, shopkeeper and industrialist, trade unionist and professional man, Freemasons, Merchant Venturers, Co-operators and many more—their number is almost without limit. Political power is continually shifting, sometimes Left, sometimes Right, but not too far either way. Its possession, however, does not carry with it necessarily a preponderance in economic influence nor does the group which at any given time happens to be economically or politically most significant always enjoy the greatest social prestige. Indeed, Bristol is English of the English, for just as foreigners mistook the contemporary English inertia for decadence, so others mistook Bristol's calm for senility and both views were happily mistaken.

Such then, in brief, is the story of this famous old city during the 'twenties and 'thirties. It was a pleasant place in which to live. It preferred its own way of doing things and it may have erred in the direction of complacency, but still its own way was well tried and, in the main, it was a good way.

## II

### RELUCTANT PREPARATIONS

OF ONE thing Bristolians were certain in 1918: there must not be another Great War. If foreigners were inclined to break the peace, there was now the League of Nations to keep the wrongdoers in their places. People forgot that the League had no force of its own, and was solely dependent on the goodwill of member states. But why bother about such unpleasant things? There would be no more war when nobody wanted it. So conversation would drift off to the chances of England in the next Test Match, the last victory of the Bristol Rugby team or the latest achievement of the Rovers or Bristol City. So Bristol went upon its lawful occasions, while it read vaguely of a fanatic called Hitler, who led a rising in Munich in 1923, and of a former smith called Mussolini, whose black-shirted followers marched on Rome. But the German was soon in prison and Mussolini became a figure of fun. Anyhow, Germany and Italy were both far off and things nearer home were much more interesting. It was quite ridiculous to talk of war for as the 'twenties ran out it was solemnly outlawed by the nations.

With the 'thirties the tempo of change became more rapid. Germany and Italy grew steadily more outrageous, but the people of Bristol were too obsessed with their own concerns to bother unduly about the maelstrom of Continental politics. Hindenberg passed from the stage of European affairs and Hitler, the contemptible leader of the unsuccessful putsch of ten years before, was master of Germany. The Weimar Republic disappeared and a new savage state took its place. Mussolini was now talking of the Mediterranean as *Mare Nostrum*. He laid claim to Malta and Tunis, and prepared for adventures further afield. Still England remained pacifist at heart. She had had more than enough of war between 1914 and 1918, and those who had the foresight and the courage to warn their

countrymen of the unmistakable signs of trouble ahead were dubbed war-mongers and dismissed from the public mind.

Contrary to the spirit and letter of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was building up an enormous air force; she reached parity with England in 1935. She did not attempt to conceal her military aspirations and in the construction of her new pocket battleships she showed great ingenuity. Few people in England believed what they were told, and the majority refused to think that the militant spirit of Germany carried in it any threat to them. The Government of the day was soothing and the nation wanted to be soothed. British policy was conciliatory, both to Germany and to Italy, and the British public wished it to be conciliatory. Almost everyone in the country was anxious to believe that there was no danger. When, therefore, Italy attacked Ethiopia and crushed her, and the League of Nations was powerless to do anything in the matter, people were surprised and disappointed that this new wonderful creation of the human spirit should cut such a sorry figure when confronted by a determined peace-breaker. It was natural to belittle Italy, for after all her victory was a contemptible one gained over a primitive and almost defenceless African state. By the middle 'thirties, however, some stirrings of apprehension about Germany were perceptible, for though the British ostrich still kept its head firmly in the sand it began to change its position slightly so as to uncover half an eye in order to make quite certain that all in the world about it was as peaceable and satisfactory as it wished to believe.

On 14 May 1935 the possibility of war was for the first time seriously entertained by the Bristol City Council. Mr. Rogers inquired from the Town Clerk whether any committee had so far considered the desirability of making provision for the safety of the public against possible air raids. It was stated in reply that nothing had been done as yet, but the Town Clerk understood that the Government had this subject under review. A month or so later, a circular was issued by the Home Office which contained some preliminary suggestions on the policy to be adopted if unhappily the city was attacked by air. When this was made known, the City Council was asked to receive a deputation from the Bristol Peace Council as that body desired to lodge a strong protest against the "war-mongering policy of the Government."

According to the petitioners, such preparations as those that had been announced were both unnecessary and dangerous. They would merely serve to encourage fire-eaters at home and cause antagonism and suspicion abroad among people who wished to be our friends. If Great Britain had the wisdom to maintain a pacific policy the storm clouds would roll away, and there would be no war. It is significant of the spirit of that time that the motion to receive this deputation was supported by a substantial section of Council members. Notwithstanding its rejection, the support it was given was a measure of Bristol's repugnance to the mere thought of war.

In October 1935 the question of air raid precautions came up again. By then, five principal officers of the city were considering the Government's circular and shortly afterwards they attended a conference with Home Office officials, at which it was discussed. While the Government was ready to bear the cost of necessary apparatus required for safety against air raids, local authorities were not to incur any considerable expenditure at that time. So Bristol began with some hesitation and much reluctance to prepare for war, but few, as yet, gave it more than a passing thought. When they did think of air raid precautions their reflections were frequently flavoured with ridicule. Now, for the first time, Council and committee rooms resounded to animated discussions on respirators, air raid warning equipment, gas detection, decontamination and so on. The Red Cross and St. John Ambulance organizations announced that they were ready to provide instruction for the general public when it was required. On 10 December a committee of seven was appointed to concern itself with air raid precautions. Some members, not satisfied with this, urged the Council to press the Government to do all in its power, through ordinary diplomatic channels or through the League of Nations or in any other way, to secure abolition of aerial warfare. Even though this proposal was later dropped it was an indication of the prevailing sentiment.

The problem of air raid precautions was considered by the Council from time to time during the next three years. In March 1936 it was reported that the Air Raid Precautions Committee had referred this question to a sub-committee of civic officers. The atmosphere of unreality in which such dis-

cussions were still conducted, however, is revealed by the attitude of the A.R.P. Committee. That body considered that, while no estimate could as yet be made of the cost for anti-gas and other training, the sum involved would not be large.

While these tentative moves were being made in Bristol, the international horizon was becoming darker. In 1935 Hitler showed his true mettle by the so-called "blood bath" in which so many of his former colleagues and friends were swept from his path. In the following year, in defiance of the Peace Treaty, he marched into the Rhineland, but still England refused to read the message which he was writing in letters of blood. Indeed, convinced by German propaganda, some Englishmen were now declaring that Germany had a right to be mistress in her own house. There was probably a good deal of truth, they asserted, in what the Germans were now saying about the "dictate of Versailles"; but few of them had the energy to look up the terms of the Versailles settlement. Meanwhile the triumphant legions of the Duce crushed Ethiopia. Both Hitler and Mussolini sent their airmen and their soldiers to the Spanish War, avowedly to help General Franco, but in fact to give them an opportunity of practice in modern warfare and to enable them to pick up experience of how aerial bombardment and the *Blitzkrieg* should be conducted. As later events were to show, they learned much in the Spanish War, and all this time German rearmament was increasing.

In peaceful Bristol, however, there was still no feeling of urgency and preparations went forward in a leisurely manner. In October 1936 the Council was told that a scheme had been drawn up by the sub-committee of officers and that it had been accepted by the A.R.P. Committee and the Home Office. It was now being worked out in greater detail and the A.R.P. Committee was looking about for suitable first aid, casualty and clearing-station premises. That autumn the sum of £500 was included in the estimates to cover the cost of drawing up plans and training personnel, but no provision was made for the purchase of equipment or the adaptation of buildings. Before the end of the year, Mr. J. D. Fry, former Director of Experiments in the chemical research department of the War Office, was appointed to assist the A.R.P. Committee. Close liaison

between the responsible officials and the various public utility companies was maintained. The gas and water supplies were examined, and what were considered to be sufficient precautions were taken to ensure that these vital services should not fail.

So 1937 came in, but although there was much activity behind the scenes there was little evidence in Bristol of impending war. In a vague kind of way people were stirred by the horrors of the struggle in Spain. Some volunteers had already gone to fight, either for Franco or for the Government, and many contributed generously to Spanish relief. Communists and Fascists were now much more active, but they were discredited because of their methods, their avowed intentions and their presumed subservience to foreign powers. Sunday after Sunday at their meetings on the Downs the Communists proclaimed the glories of Russia. They listened with rapt attention to the fiery orators who addressed them, and sang the *Internationale* with pious zeal. Sir Oswald Mosley visited Bristol more than once and addressed the Rotary Club and other respectable bodies. He exercised his unquestionable personal charm to its utmost, but the people of Bristol were quick to see that a world of difference lay between his suave persuasiveness and the brutal treatment meted out to hecklers at Fascist meetings by his gangs of bullies. "A plague on both their houses" was the attitude of the average citizen, who turned with relief from contemplating the antics of these two pathological groups to the fortunes of England's cricketers in Australia.

Almost everyone in England was anxious not to provoke the aggressor into sudden action. So in Bristol the City Council rejected the proposal of Mr. R. F. Lyne that leave of absence on full pay should be granted to all city employees who wished to join the Territorials. Loud and frequent protestations of the desire for peace, and declarations of goodwill toward Germany and Italy, in spite of the enormities already committed by Hitler and Mussolini, were duly noted in Berlin and Rome. It has subsequently been made plain that this excessively pacific attitude was mistaken for decadence by the Germans and the Italians and indeed by many of Britain's friends.

By now the estimated cost of essential air raid precautions was rising. It was therefore desirable that the city should come

to some satisfactory arrangement with the Treasury about the distribution of this new financial burden. After some hesitation, the Home Office announced that the Treasury would bear fifty per cent of the local charges. This news aroused angry expostulation throughout the country. The Association of Municipal Corporations recommended its members to abstain from further expenditure on local schemes until more satisfactory terms could be extracted from Whitehall. But, whoever bore the cost, the work had to go on, and training was offered to workers, whether employed by the city or by industrial firms, as well as to the general public. Still, recruitment was slow and few as yet took advantage of the instruction provided by the St. John Ambulance and Red Cross organizations. The Bristol A.R.P. Committee now established a liaison with similar bodies in Somerset and Gloucestershire, while all the time the long-distance battle of minutes, circulars and words between Bristol and Whitehall grew in intensity. At the end of the year Parliament bestirred itself sufficiently to pass an A.R.P. Act, which received the Royal Assent in December.

So 1937 ran its course; 1938 came in, and time was getting short. Austria was overrun in March, and the turgid flood of German violence continued to rise. At the end of January, the local authorities came to a more satisfactory financial arrangement with the Government; it was now agreed that the Treasury should bear sixty-five per cent at least of the cost of "approved expenditure" on precautionary work. So at last an air of reality was creeping into these preparations, but as the winter passed and spring came that imperative sense of urgency which should have vitalized the effort of the whole nation at this time was lacking. The majority still clung to the hope of peace. It is, however, true that a growing sense of uneasiness was abroad, for the war of nerves was beginning to tell.

While preparations for the destruction of Czechoslovakia were relentlessly pushed forward in Germany, the attention of the English nation was again riveted on Test Matches. Hutton made 364 runs in one innings that summer which was far more significant than the speeches of Hitler. "Would Gloucestershire win the Championship?" was a more urgent question for Bristolians than the possible end of Czechoslovakia. "Why should England interfere in the affairs of that distant and little-



known country? Germany is not our enemy no matter how brutal she may be to her weaker neighbours." This was in truth one of the most ignominious periods in British history. The nation magnified the power of the aggressor and belittled its own. It tried to conciliate its enemy and it deserted its friends. The excuse that there was nothing else that Britain could do by then was merely a confession of the appalling ineptitude of the Government she had chosen and of the infirm purpose of individual citizens.

The expense of preparation was now obvious. Whereas eighteen months before, councillors had discussed A.R.P. in terms of hundreds of pounds, estimated expenses of the various departments for the ensuing year were now expressed in thousands. Five thousand air raid wardens were required; the Medical Officer of Health stated that he needed an equal number of volunteers for casualty work and other branches of his service; the City Engineer wanted an additional 600 men, who were to be trained to clear streets, repair damaged highways and for decontamination work. As it was believed that the provision of bomb-proof shelters for all was far too costly to be contemplated, it was proposed to adapt suitable cellars as hide-outs for the public. Street lighting, respirators, the strengthening of the Police Force and of the Fire Brigade provided subjects for discussion during the spring and summer of 1938. All of this, it was estimated, would cost £37,850. £24,500 would come from the Treasury and the rest from the rates. This was shocking news indeed, especially for those, and there were many of them, who still believed that these efforts were unnecessary.

Viewed in the light of later events, progress was still lamentably slow. Thus in Parliament it was stated that the form of air raid warning had not been determined but it was probable sirens of some sort would be used. So at length the fateful month of September was reached. By then the instruction of the general public was getting under way; the B.B.C. and the Press were ready to do their utmost to assist the authorities in communicating information and, given the leadership, there was no lack of goodwill among the citizens. An enormous reservoir of readiness to serve could be drawn upon, but the vital initiative needed was still absent. In Bristol, of the 2191

men who had volunteered and been accepted for warden service, 1064 were trained, while 460 had been allocated to particular sectors before the end of the summer and were ready to begin fitting civilian respirators. Of the 2500 needed by the British Red Cross Society and St. John Ambulance Brigade, about 1000 were trained. Many had volunteered for the various other local services but thousands more were required. Meanwhile the problem of shelters was continually in the mind of the A.R.P. Committee, but as late as September no clear instruction had yet been given by the Home Office as to the scale upon which these should be provided, and even when the Munich crisis came this whole subject was wrapped in obscurity and tied up in red tape. It was not until August that the Home Office relaxed its discouragement of expenditure other than that which was required for training and the storage of equipment.

There was justification for the view of Bristol that the vacillation of the Home Office and other departments of the central Government during this period of preparation caused unnecessary delays and much irritation. For example, the purchase of 55 Broadmead, as an A.R.P. headquarters, was agreed to by the City Council on 29 March but this was not ratified by the Home Office until 17 August and the Ministry of Health did not give its consent for the raising of the necessary loan until 19 September. Bristol could reasonably complain not only of delay but that there was an attitude of mind pervading Whitehall which approached perilously near obstruction. Thus the Home Office rejected the portable apparatus for decontamination invented by the Bristol Air Raid Precautions Medical Officer, but had nothing to offer in its place. Although this mechanism may not have been all that it should have been, it was better than nothing. Another officer devised an all-metal stretcher which also was rejected by the Home Office, as stretchers were to be provided by the Government; yet when the Munich crisis came the air raid apparatus was wanting, and there were no stretchers. The A.R.P. Committee, therefore, acted on its own responsibility; it ordered the necessary equipment and the purchase of 1600 stretchers. Again, 389,200 respirators were to be sent to Bristol for immediate distribution. The day was fixed, the wardens were ready and the public was

anxious. Then, at the last moment, word was received that 146,989 gas-masks were incomplete and that distribution could not begin. On 12 September the Chief Constable was instructed to order six sirens, which were to be set up at once, but none was delivered, and when the Munich crisis arose an improvised system was used. Only one firm in the country was producing sirens and as orders were coming into it from all parts of Britain it could not meet the demand.

Undoubtedly the Home Office had good reason for proceeding with care, for exuberant and extravagant local spending had to be curbed. War was not yet certain, or rather was not certain in the minds of the leaders of the Government, and Parliament had not decided what was to be done. Mr. Chamberlain, as his speeches at this time show, was convinced that peace was still possible. If this hope was destined to be realized the money spent on air raid precautions was sheer waste. But, whatever the justification may have been, it was still true that local initiative was to a considerable extent stultified by the pusillanimity of Whitehall. The events of this time provide a sober reminder of the difficulties that are likely to arise when too much power is concentrated at the centre. It would be a catastrophe if British municipal authorities were allowed to degenerate into mere tools of a vast centralized bureaucracy.

The City Engineer, the official responsible for many of these preparations, was seriously impeded in his work by restrictions similar to those already referred to. The Chief Constable complained of lack of equipment. Thus, for example, when the crisis of 1938 came, since the towing-bars which had been ordered had not yet arrived, it was impossible to use private cars to draw pumps as had been planned. Such information as this was received by the Council with great annoyance and it readily passed a resolution, brought forward by Alderman Burgess, that much of the unpreparedness of the time was due to the Government's policy of over-centralization. This resolution went on to pray that in the future local authorities should be told precisely what equipment they were to receive and what expenditure they might incur.

Blaming the Government, however, did not solve Bristol's difficulties, as the local authorities well knew. So they expressed

their dissatisfaction and carried on with their work as best they could. In some ways the Munich crisis was a blessing in disguise. For the first time, the people of the city as a whole began to think that war after all might be possible. Trenches were dug in College Green and in other open spaces. By the end of September there was trench shelter accommodation for 40,000 citizens, but it is worthy of mention that this work alone had cost £50,000. It was reported that in addition another 14,500 people could be accommodated in specially selected cellars. Even then, although there was some improvement in recruitment, volunteers for the various services were woefully few. The A.R.P. Committee, which had recently been strengthened by the addition of four members, two from the Chamber of Commerce and two from the Trades and Labour Council, was now increased to sixteen. In the light of the experiences derived from the Munich episode the whole A.R.P. machine was overhauled. In October Mr. Lyne again returned to the attack on the subject of leave for young men who wished to join the Territorial Army. But the Council was not yet ready to be so positive. After a long debate an amendment was accepted, that while the Council agreed with the principle of the motion the matter should be considered by a conference of all Bristol employers.

By the end of 1938 the strengthened A.R.P. Committee was working smoothly. Its activities were so extensive that it had become necessary to create four sub-committees, to each of which had been delegated particular tasks: control, medical services, engineering services and co-ordination. But recruitment was again backward. At the end of the year only 1521 trained wardens had been allocated to sectors; there had been a mere fifty-two volunteers for fire-fighting since October and a similar state of lethargy prevailed in all the other services, but this was scarcely a matter for surprise in view of the Prime Minister's declaration. On his return from Munich he had said, "This is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time." The man in the street held that if this was so, it was absurd to dig trenches, try on gas-masks and generally make himself uncomfortable because of a quarrel in a faraway unknown country. Why should he waste his time in

acquiring a lot of knowledge that would never be of any service?

This period was indeed a curious one of contradiction, and the wonder is that the confusion was not greater. Thus, the same Government, whose leaders spoke so confidently of peace, before the end of the year enumerated twelve industrial cities, of which Bristol was not one, whose unessential people should be evacuated at the outbreak of war. Bristol was to be a neutral area, that is, though her people were not to be sent away she was not to receive evacuees from elsewhere. So autumn passed into winter and the trenches which had been dug in haste in September, at such great expense, filled with water. Those that were considered to be beyond repair and were a danger to the general public were filled in, while the others were drained and made serviceable. The result was that the City Engineer could declare that there was shelter accommodation available for 14,500 people. It was still hard for Bristol or the nation to take all this very seriously. How could people believe in the imminence of war when the City Council adopted a resolution, passed by the Conference of London Local Authorities, which called for disarmament and the abolition of the air-arm?

An increasing minority, however, now believed that the outbreak of war was not far off. One member of the Council proposed that a car-park should be constructed under College Green, which in time of need could be used as a shelter; another recommended the tunnelling of Brandon Hill; still others speculated on the uses that might be made of the Caves at Redcliffe or of the disused Clifton Bridge railway tunnel. The protection of school children was much discussed, but little could be done until the necessary authority was given by Whitehall; that authority was, however, slow in coming. Yet things were moving faster now. In February it was announced that small steel shelters would be provided free to those who could not pay for them. Of the 86,500 dwellings in the city stated to be suitable for such shelters, 80,000 were inhabited by people whose annual income did not exceed £250-£300. There were, however, about 11,000 dwellings situated at some distance from any open space that did not possess suitable cellars, and where there was no adjacent room for the erection of small steel shelters. Such areas must be provided with public shelters.

## THE GATHERING STORM

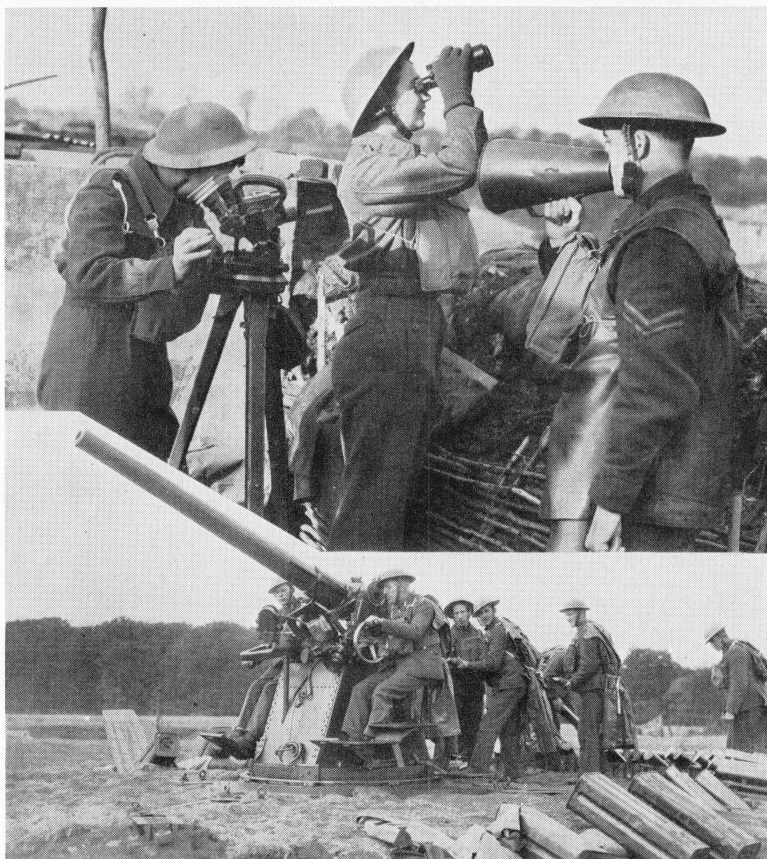
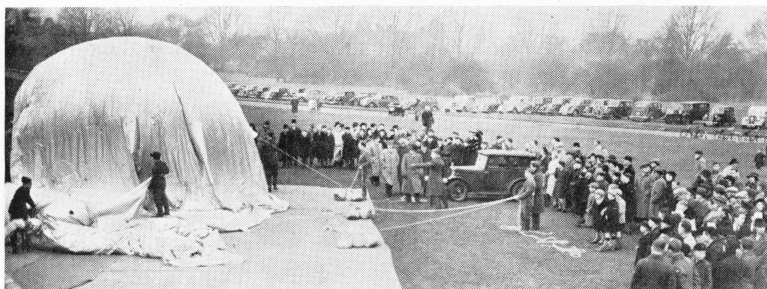


Decontamination drill—22 August 1938.



Assembling gas masks—28 September 1938.

## DEFENCE OF A CITY



The barrage balloon demonstration was on 29 March 1939. When war began the Territorials, here shown in training with 3-inch guns, manned the local gun-site, where later the A.T.S. also played their part.

In March 1939 Czechoslovakia was finally over-run. So a brave nation was crushed, and the strength of the peace-loving democracies still further reduced. At the end of that month, in order to prevent an attack on Poland, Great Britain and France made it known that they would come to the assistance of that country if her independence were threatened. This, however, came too late, for by then the dictators had good reason for treating such statements with contempt. The Western powers might chatter and bluster, but the rulers of Germany and Italy were convinced that the democracies would never fight. Italy occupied Albania in April and few people in England now had any doubt about the impending war. The question on everyone's lips was: When will it come?

The unreadiness of Bristol was lamentable. In April only fifty of the 200 vehicles considered necessary for ambulance work were available: more equipment was required; premises were needed; houses still had to be adapted; volunteers were largely untrained; recruits were coming forward far too slowly and there were not enough shelters. The existing Police Force was 670 strong, all ranks, and it was now decided to recruit an equal number to form a Police War Reserve. The training of these men began forthwith but they were not paid until the outbreak of hostilities. The Dean of Bristol became Chairman of a Hostels Committee, which was to concern itself with the re-housing of those rendered homeless by enemy attack. This Committee was also to ensure that the premises it selected for this purpose should be provided beforehand with all the necessary bedding and other equipment that might be needed in an emergency.

During the summer shelter accommodation in trenches was extended and cellars, capable of holding 3500 people, were placed at the disposal of the authorities, by the citizens. It was the official view that public accommodation should be provided for ten per cent of the population living in residential areas, and for fifteen per cent of the population in business areas. On the basis of the Home Office estimate public shelters were still required for another 25,000. It was the intention of the local authority that domestic shelter accommodation should be provided for all. In July the Medical Service was strengthened by the appointment of more officers, who were to manage seven



first aid posts and six mobile units, and now as the crisis approached volunteers were at last coming forward in greater numbers.

The war of nerves had gone on for so long, in fact, that the nation was ready almost to welcome the outbreak of hostilities.

### III

#### THE CIVIL DEFENCE AND OTHER WARTIME SERVICES

WHEN it became known that the Government proposed to divide the country into regions, over each of which a Commissioner was to preside, widespread clamour developed; British liberties, it was said, were threatened and the country was about to be placed under the yoke of a new despotism. On 9 November 1938 one councillor inquired from the Town Clerk whether he had received a secret letter from the Home Office outlining a scheme for the supersession of democratic government in the municipalities of Britain in the event of hostilities. It turned out, however, that when the Commissioners were appointed and took up their posts they proved themselves on innumerable occasions to be powerful allies of the local authorities in the unending battle with Whitehall. Many a city councillor and local official came to believe that it was not the regional commissioners who were the danger, but officials in Whitehall with too much or too little to do or who had an exaggerated opinion of their own wisdom. They, if anyone, were the enemies of local autonomy and always they justified their autocratic behaviour in the name of efficiency. But while the Commissioner, Sir Hugh Elles, was a doughty champion of Bristol's point of view, he never failed to impress upon Bristolians the unreasonableness of criticisms frequently made of officialdom, often utterly unfair. "You can say what you like about Whitehall," he remarked on one occasion, "but Whitehall has certainly achieved a formidable amount of good." The Commissioner, then, stood at the head of the civil defence system of his region, but, though Bristol was under him, the actual business of dealing with civil defence was in the hands of the local authority.

It has been seen in the preceding chapter that an Air Raid Precautions Committee was established in 1935. Four years

later, in April 1939, on the request of the Lord Privy Seal, the Council appointed an Emergency Committee which consisted of Mr. A. W. Cox, Mr. A. H. Downes Shaw, Alderman Sir John Inskip and Mr. F. A. Parish; but it did not come into action until the outbreak of war. Although all four were keen party men, they worked harmoniously together without any thought of political difference or party interest. This group of devoted citizens did yeoman service for their city and their work should be remembered.

Of the many difficult tasks which confronted these gentlemen one of the most delicate was their relations with the A.R.P. Committee. Unless great care was taken, misunderstandings might have arisen between these two groups of public-spirited citizens; each might have got in the other's way, a situation which would have resulted in confusion and would certainly have created undesirable personal antagonisms. The exercise of commonsense and forbearance on both sides, sweetened with good humour and a determination to promote the general good, prevented any such unfortunate result and enabled these two committees to co-operate harmoniously throughout the war. The Air Raid Precautions Committee had charge of equipment; it watched over the efficiency of the service and its general well-being, while the Emergency Committee confined its attention to the determination of policy, control of operations in emergencies and the solution of problems to which these gave rise. The most important official in this administrative machine was the Controller. This officer was required to maintain contact with the Ministry of Home Security, in addition to his responsibilities to Regional headquarters, the A.R.P. and Emergency Committees.

In the Spring of 1939 Mr. H. M. Webb, City Engineer, was appointed A.R.P. Controller and down to the close of the war he contrived, without apparent effort, to perform the work of several men. Thanks to his clear grasp of detail and his tactful handling of people, who might otherwise have been difficult, affability prevailed. On one occasion he was examining a large wall map which had just been put up by his staff in the office of a temporary official who had been very persistent to see that everything was in order. "Well," said Webb as he looked up at the finished job, "now. . . , I suppose we can get on with the

war." Bristol was indeed most fortunate in its Emergency Committee, its A.R.P. Committee and most of all in its Controller.

The diagram on the next page will make clear the range and complexity of the Bristol Civil Defence organization as it developed during the war. Here it is impossible to mention all the services without becoming tedious, but in their various capacities each made its own contribution.

In 1939 the Bristol operational area consisted of six divisions but, in the autumn of the following year, as it was found that this was too restricted, Gloucester No. 16 Area (Filton) and Somerset No. 1 Area (Clevedon and Portishead) were added. Each of these divisions contained a report centre and an action depot, which were placed as near as possible to each other, and frequently housed in the same building.

The Communications Service was the medium through which the A.R.P. Controller exercised his authority over all the services under his jurisdiction. From June 1942 onwards compulsory direction to part-time civil defence kept the establishment reasonably up to strength and, in spite of all difficulties, the Report Centres were manned twenty-four hours of the day throughout the war. 1851 men and women served in this branch during hostilities.

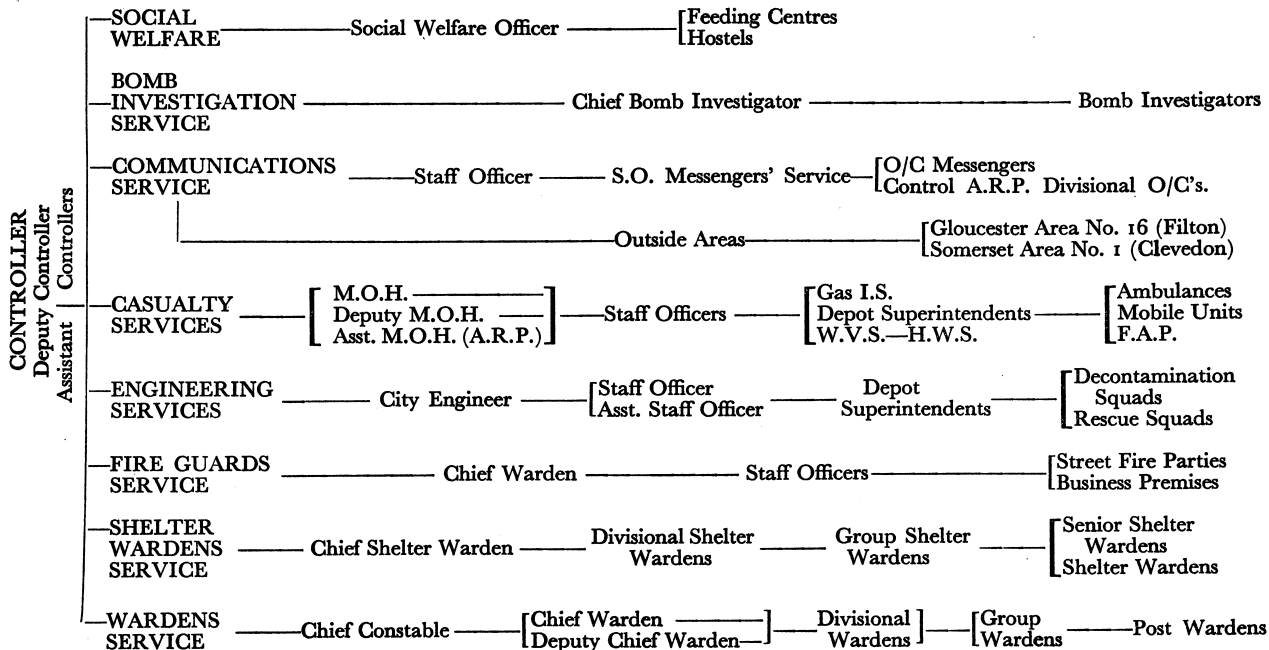
An important ancillary to Communications was the Messenger Service which drew very largely for its recruits upon the Boy Scouts. The number of cycle and motor-cycle messengers grew during the first year of the war until by September, 1940, 690 had been enrolled, even though the Government allowed equipment for fewer than 250. In the period of heavy raiding they maintained communications between officers when all other means had been destroyed, and many a Bristol family is proud of the record of its youngsters, six of whom won commendation from the King and two of whom were killed.

In addition to his other duties, the Controller also maintained a close liaison with the public utility services, the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Co. Ltd., the Petroleum Board, the Port of Bristol Authority and other organizations.

As it was realized that the Police Force and Fire Brigade would be overburdened in air raid conditions, special rescue parties were organized. Throughout the whole period of raiding

# BRISTOL CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANIZATION

26



BRISTOL AT WAR

twenty-two rescue parties were continually on duty by day and thirty by night, each of which consisted of ten members. In all, 482 calls were received, 697 people were rescued and 833 bodies were recovered. This includes the service performed in Exeter, Weston-super-Mare and Bath as well as Bristol. Forty-eight of these men were killed and eighty-two injured in the discharge of their duties. Like other branches of civil defence, the rescue parties, when not engaged on their grim duties, carried out many useful tasks such as the salvaging of food and household effects as well as the transfer of large quantities of coal from railway sidings to appropriate depots. By D-Day a scheme had been prepared by which, if the need arose, 200 rescue parties could have been organized. Some members of this service won decorations, but though the names of the majority may remain unknown, the work they did will live in the memory of their native city, to whose records of noble deeds they made so considerable a contribution.

It was from the action depots that rescue, first aid and ambulance parties were sent out. Before the war ended eight first aid posts, equipped with mobile units, had been established. In addition, there were some fourteen first aid points, each in the charge of a nurse with voluntary helpers.

The backbone of civil defence was of course the Wardens Service. This was placed under the direction of the Chief Constable, who had immediately under his command a chief warden and deputy. Each of the six civil defence divisions was in charge of a divisional warden assisted by a deputy. Each division in turn consisted of a number of groups with their group wardens and deputies. There were sixty-one of these in Bristol. A group was divided into a number of sectors which contained about 500 people. The first important activity of this service was the distribution and the fitting of respirators at the outbreak of war. As there were some 450,000 of these it is not difficult to imagine the extent of this task. Later, respirators were checked and special ones for infants, asthmatics and other groups were distributed. Elsewhere in this book reference will be made to the work of these gallant men and women who not only served Bristol but helped as well in many other towns, including London during the rocket raids of 1944. It was to be expected that in a service so large and whose duties required

its members to patrol the streets during raids, there should be many casualties—twenty-nine wardens were killed and 134 seriously wounded. The force was finally disbanded on 2 May 1945. At that time its strength was 3756 men and 1582 women.

When war was declared the local Fire Service numbered 85 full-time officers and men, while at its inception the Auxiliary Fire Service consisted of 1175 officers and men and 40 women, all full-time. In addition there were about 3000 part-time firemen. Here it may be appropriate to mention that the nationalization of the fire services did not occur until August 1941, that is subsequent to the worst period of the war for Bristol. The three divisions into which the city was then divided included Avonmouth but in the following year these were amalgamated and part of Gloucestershire was also included. The result was that "Division A," as Bristol was styled, was one of the biggest fire divisions in the country.

The task of the N.F.S. was greatly eased, particularly after the experience of the early raids, by the Fire Guard, which came under the direction of the Chief Warden. This service grew with amazing rapidity and soon after it was set up it numbered 65,000 members who were distributed in 2900 street parties. After the tragic experiences of November and December 1940 Fire Guard duties became obligatory on all able-bodied citizens not otherwise engaged on civil defence. In 1943 the Fire Guard took over from the Wardens' service responsibility for the reporting of fires. Teams of Fire Guards were trained to co-operate with the N.F.S., so that in effect there was one great service with a body of highly trained professionals at its core. In September 1944 the Government announced that standby duty was to be reduced and that, with the exception of London, the manning of posts would be discontinued. By then this service had a proud record behind it. Bristol had been preserved, help had been sent to Weston-super-Mare, Plymouth, Bath, Southampton, Birmingham, Cardiff, Swansea and, indeed, on one occasion, as far afield as Manchester.

Before the war began the need for additional supplies of water had been recognized and the construction of tanks was put in hand. These were of different types and were built at different times during the war. They varied in size from the 5000 gallon receptacle authorized by the Home Office to the

250,000 gallon reservoirs built by the Corporation. A thorough survey of Bristol's water resources was made and old wells and springs were rediscovered and marked. It was the opinion of the Government experts that Bristol should have at least 25 million gallons in hand; sometimes in the winter of 1940-41 her daily consumption rose to 30 millions. The total amount of static water finally made available was about 28 million gallons. To supplement ordinary services more than twenty-four miles of 6-inch and 12-inch steel pipelines were laid.

In recognition of their notable achievements a number of members of the civil defence services received decorations—one O.B.E., five M.B.E.'s, four George Medals, ten B.E.M.'s, and eleven were commended. So many instances of bravery were reported, in fact, that it proved impossible to give the appropriate reward to all, and thus the men and women who were decorated were merely a select few chosen out of several hundreds that were almost equally deserving.

In the first months of the war citizens came to appreciate the importance of the Observer Corps, for the knowledge that day and night the skies over Britain were being watched for enemy planes produced a feeling akin to security. Indeed, this body, which acquired the distinction of "Royal" in 1941, rendered notable service throughout the whole period. Organization and training began in 1937. The men were enrolled as special constables, and down to 1939 the Corps in Bristol worked under the general direction of the Chief Constable. Shortly before the outbreak of war the force was placed directly under the control of the Air Ministry. Six crews were recruited to provide a day and night service at the centre in King Street. These men were drawn mainly at first from an association of officers of the 1914-18 war, known as the Old Stiffs Mess, and from the Bristol Savages. Although the members of the Corps took a good deal of pride in the social amenities of the centre, they were none the less determined to achieve the highest efficiency and they were grimly serious when on duty. This agreeable and friendly body of men acquitted itself gallantly when the need arose and, like the Home Guard, developed a remarkable *esprit de corps*. It is to their lasting honour that they never revealed to the public at large the fact that they carried on their arduous and important work at King Street under a glass roof.



After the period of heavy bombing was long past the remote pundits in London decided that the men over fifty, who had done so well, were too old for this trying work. So, in 1943, girls took their places in the new, comfortable and far safer quarters in Clifton Park to which the centre had been transferred two years earlier. Their brains would be clearer, it was said, and their intelligence sharper; against these attributes practical experience was of little significance to the official mind. After the first feeling of irritation had worn itself off, Bristol, including the gallant men affected, merely laughed at this latest manifestation of post-crisis bureaucratic omniscience. Although they were considered too old for work at the centre, they were still accepted for the physically more trying task of serving at the observer posts in the country.

Information about the movement of all aircraft, friendly and hostile, was received from neighbouring observer centres and from thirty-six local observer posts. The courses of all planes were plotted, tracked and passed on to Fighter Command and neighbouring observer centres. Another task which devolved upon the Observer Corps was to pass on warnings of impending attack to Home Security. Thus, by providing up-to-date information, people engaged on important war work were prevented from wasting their time in shelters when there was no danger. Moreover, many a friendly aircraft in thick weather, thanks to the vigilance of the Observer Corps, was guided to a safe landing.

Bristol attaches considerable value to her civic records. On the outbreak of war, therefore, the archives were moved to Portway Tunnel, where, in the previous May, a bombproof, specially air-conditioned and suitably heated record room had been constructed. Later on, other manuscripts, valuable books and papers from the University, municipal charity trust deeds and the archives of the Merchant Venturers were placed there. After heavy air raids began in 1940 the parish records of St. James's, St. Philip's and St. Jacob's, St. Augustine's and Temple found their way to this safe place. As a result of this wise precaution, many valuable historical documents were preserved. Unhappily, however, those in St. Peter's Hospital were not transferred and were lost when that building was destroyed.

During the first winter of the war, the Women's Voluntary

Service won its spurs. Blood transfusion campaigns; salvage of paper and salvage of everything else that was to be salvaged; the relief of evacuees; a remarkable canteen service at action depots, first aid posts and at the docks, were but a few of the tasks undertaken by the W.V.S. It recruited and trained drivers for ambulances; it ran the car pool which was at the service of all Government departments—local, regional and central—and of all other bodies concerned with the war that were in need of transport. It assisted in the movement of patients from hospitals, and in the period of restoration after raids its members were always on hand with their cups of tea. Later, when the great civil defence exercises took place, it was the W.V.S. that provided the refreshments both for the Home Guard and for the other civil defence services. The W.V.S. received troops on their return from Dunkirk, it helped to feed men on troop trains that were passing through the city, it collected an enormous amount of clothes which it repaired and distributed. Its sewing parties were continually at work, and in every street of the city its Housewives Service was at the heart of every movement which made for good neighbourliness. These are but a few samples of the work of this remarkable organization, and in view of what its members did throughout the war it is difficult to understand how in previous crises in the nation's history the country managed to survive without the W.V.S.

As it was felt that each of the principal officers understood his work and could be trusted to co-operate with his colleagues without any thought of precedence or *amour propre*, no mechanical allocation of seniority or authority was deemed to be necessary. Each service was allowed to continue as a separate entity because it was believed that when the need arose they would combine with or supplement the efforts of the others and, as events proved, this belief was well-founded. Thus a closely-knit, coherent, flexible and efficient service was evolved, which stood the terrible tests to which later it was subjected. To the tidy-minded doctrinaire, who demands that everything should be clear-cut and streamlined, this mechanism must have appeared as a monstrous creation of muddle-headedness. Yet it worked and that was its justification. It worked better, with far greater smoothness, than that slick kind of machine so dear to the heart of the theorist and the autocrat. It worked because it

met practical needs in a practical way, because the members of each branch knew that they could trust their colleagues in the others, and because all concerned, officers and rank and file, were fired with the same determination, irrespective of personal interests, to serve their city.

## IV

### THE "PHONEY" WAR

GREAT Britain took up arms in 1939 in a sober spirit. The memory of the last war, which had destroyed so large a part of a whole generation of young men, was still too fresh in the public mind to permit of facile jubilation. There was, therefore, none of that buoyant enthusiasm that characterized the early days of August 1914. There were no delirious, cheering crowds surging in the streets, singing patriotic songs and waving the Union Jack. In 1939 people heard the grave words, in which the Prime Minister announced that the country was at war, on radios in their houses, or they heard it from the pulpit as they sat in their churches, and a feeling of foreboding prevailed. Men and women went about their business in Bristol quietly as usual but with no elation. Throughout the long hours of that memorable Sunday they lived in momentary expectation of enemy attack, for many weeks were to elapse before they understood the nature of this strange war that had come upon them. In one city church the morning sermon took the form of a lecture on A.R.P. and an exhortation by the vicar that his congregation should join the civil defence forces, but generally the Sunday passed as usual.

The local Territorial Army units were embodied and marched away—or drove away in their strangely assorted transport. Some of them were established in camps on the outskirts of the city and during the first winter of the war one important activity of the citizens consisted in the collection of articles of many kinds needed by the troops. This work was to a large extent in the hands of the local Press which received enthusiastic and generous support from people of all conditions.

During the years 1939–46 Bristol's Own Fund, inaugurated by the *Evening Post* and supported by the *Evening World* and the *Western Daily Press*, performed many notable services for the city. Her men in the Forces, whether they were camped

nearby, elsewhere in England or were on active service; whether they were prisoners of war or lying wounded in hospitals—all of them were cheered by parcels and gifts of all kinds that ranged from footballs to pianos, from dominoes to easy chairs, socks to garden rollers. At the Red Lodge alone the *Evening Post* entertained 9000 sick and wounded soldiers, sailors and airmen. One Christmas it sent 7000 servicemen's children to the pantomime, while 5000 others too young to go there were suitably entertained.

It was believed that the onslaught of the enemy, when it came, would be sudden and ferocious. The ordinary citizen had little knowledge of the nation's power to resist, though he had been well schooled during the recent past about the enemy's power to strike, and the horrors of the Spanish war were still fresh in all men's minds. Yet, while there was a widespread feeling of depression about things to come, there was no thought of defeat. England had successfully faced great perils in the past and what had been done could be done again. Philip II and Napoleon had plotted England's destruction, but had failed, and even the Kaiser, with all the might of the German Empire, had been overthrown.

Bristolians, as they went about the streets, had a curious unprotected feeling as if they lacked some necessary garment, but they soon became accustomed to the thought that, at a minute's notice, enemy planes might appear in the sky above them and hurtle death upon the city. Explosive bombs and incendiaries were, as yet, little more than mere names to the majority of the population and far less distressing prospects to the masses than was gas. There had been much, perhaps rather too much, talk about this dread weapon in recent months, and the general public, because it had so little real knowledge of the subject, tended to vest it with horrible and exaggerated potentialities. Indeed, the skilful and malevolent propagandist might easily have used fear of poison gas to promote mass hysteria; news that anti-gas precautions were well in hand, and assurances about the efficacy of the gas-masks they were exhorted to carry, were vastly comforting.

At first, there was a natural tendency to over-emphasize the transition from peace to war. The schools, the Stock Exchange, places of entertainment were all closed and the police opposed

the holding of any public meeting, however small. This phase of excessive negation passed away when it was recognized that, even in wartime, people must live their ordinary lives and, indeed, that the more normal they could make them the better. Theatres re-opened within a week. Before many months passed, the demand for Sunday cinemas was irresistible. Business resumed its usual rhythm, quickened somewhat by war conditions, public meetings were more numerous than ever and before Christmas children were attending school as usual. In fact, when the heavy enemy attacks came in late 1940, the pendulum had swung too far in the opposite direction, for neither the general public nor the officials could adjust themselves wholly to wartime conditions—but more of this later.

While the German war machine rolled relentlessly forward, and Poland was overwhelmed, Bristol was transforming herself. The Regional Commissioner entered upon his official duties on 1 September, Imperial Airways established itself at the Grand Spa Hotel, and various Government departments opened their headquarters for the South West Region in Bristol. In a few months, Woodland Road and the area about it acquired a character reminiscent of Whitehall. Houses that had been built as residences for the well-to-do were now appropriated by civil servants who turned drawing-rooms, dining-rooms, bedrooms and attics into offices. Locally recruited functionaries amused and mystified their fellow citizens by high-sounding official titles, usually expressed in cryptic combinations of letters. This introduction of fresh new blood into the Civil Service from business, the professions and trade unions ensured that, in the time of crisis, long established and official practice would be tempered by amateur improvisation. A year later, when enemy attacks on the city began, the advantages of this became patent to all, for when unprecedented problems arose rigid adherence to rule had to yield to more flexible and imaginative ways. Some red tape is necessary if chaos is to be avoided, but the widespread British repugnance to it is healthy. A few Bristolians disliked it so much that they were on occasion disposed to find it where it did not exist. In fact, the city was fortunate in the civil servants that now arrived. The people of Bristol could, therefore, afford to laugh at that small minority who tried, but failed, to impress them by remoteness.

The B.B.C. moved some of its departments to the city and this caused considerable local gratification. For upwards of a year thereafter programmes were broadcast from a variety of rooms and adapted halls scattered about Clifton. The fact that this was done without fuss and apparently without any breach in continuity testified to the efficiency of those who carried this transfer through. Once established in its new quarters, the Music Department organized a series of symphony concerts in the Colston Hall which not only gave delight to those who heard them but provided a stimulus to local musical appreciation that was destined to endure long after the war was over. After a few preliminary excursions from London, it was from Bristol that the famous Band Wagon set out on its memorable journeyings, with Arthur Askey, "Stinker" Murdoch, Mrs. Bagwash, Nausea and the rest, along the broad highway of English humour that led straight to the nation's heart. Garrison Theatre was also broadcast from Bristol and it was here that Tommy Handley made Itma famous. On the whole, Bristol liked its B.B.C. visitors, even though some of them appeared to drink an unconscionable amount of its sherry and wore distressingly long beards. Still, when they in turn entertained Bristolians, as they frequently did, they found that the thirst of their guests was equally unquenchable, so honour was satisfied.

King's College, London, and the pre-clinical students of Middlesex Hospital also moved to Bristol. The Great Hall of the University was transformed into a library for these visitors and, wherever possible, the departments of University and College were merged. Since the staff of both institutions had already been much reduced by the disappearance of many members into the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Civil Service and other war work, accommodation for all was somehow found, though it was at times uncomfortably cramped.

This sudden influx of people into a city already full, naturally caused many problems. To find suitable lodgings for civil servants, radio stars, professors, undergraduates and a variety of office staff was not easy. Moreover, when the official rate allowed for such accommodation was put at a guinea a week the task became harder, for, even in wartime, the most patriotic citizen, in his own interest, was compelled to bear in mind practical everyday questions of cost. Though it is true that all

the hosts were not accommodating, it is equally true that not all the visitors were considerate, but the number of serious wrangles was small and soon the majority of the newcomers had comfortably settled down. In order to ensure that justice would be done all round, a billeting complaints tribunal was set up three weeks after the war began. After Christmas, there was a good deal of discussion in the local papers about Bristol's supposed lack of hospitality, but investigation proved that there was in fact no substantial evidence of this. Indeed, on the contrary, many of the visitors were generous in their expressions of gratitude for the treatment they had received and they indignantly rejected the charges that were made against their hosts.

Social life became more vigorous and varied. Clubs and societies that had been in a languishing condition now enjoyed a renaissance. Particular local taverns soon became the rendezvous of special groups. Table skittles and good cheer were to be found at the *Llandoger Trow* which, according to some Bristolians, whose local loyalty is stronger than their historical erudition, is the original of the *Spy Glass* in *Treasure Island*. The *Mauretania* provided hospitality to suit every taste while the *White Hart* in Park Row usually had draught Bass on tap. Here a select group of artists, musicians and university dons were wont to gather to discuss the aesthetic problems of the time and all the eternal imponderables. For many B.B.C. celebrities, civil servants and other distinguished visitors the *Victoria*, discreetly and demurely tucked away between St. Paul's Road and Oakfield Road, was the favourite rendezvous. Indeed, almost every public house in the city and its surrounding region, from the *Fox and Goose* on the Bridgwater road to the *Ship* at Alveston and from the *George* at Norton St. Philip to the *Salutation* at Henbury, had its own particular group, partly local, partly of visitors. Men and women on leave, artists, civil servants, air raid wardens and the ordinary citizen rubbed shoulders, joked, discussed and drank beer that was steadily growing thinner. Parties were gayer and there were more of them; concerts were better and some people referred to Bristol as London's new West End. So the first winter of the war passed pleasantly enough.

The evacuation of women and children from London started on 1 September and the generosity of Bristol citizens was at



once evoked. Thousands of "evacuees" passed through the city to the surrounding villages and countryside. Many of these newcomers arrived in unfamiliar rural surroundings ill-prepared for country life, of which many of them had had no previous experience.

They were depressed and sometimes disgruntled, weighed down with anxiety about the future of themselves and their children and about the present discomforts of their menfolk and the condition of the homes they had left behind them. Here again, there were misfits, but the number of these was grossly exaggerated. Also, there were some villagers, rich and poor, who resented the presence of these strangers in their homes; but both these groups were small. Moreover, it was inevitable that mistakes should occur in the redistribution of so many thousands of people in so short a time. Expectant mothers and women with babies in their arms landed in places which had been set aside for women and older children and *vice versa*. Again, in the hurry of departure, some evacuees did not have the time or the foresight, and indeed not a few of them lacked the money, to obtain the gear required for their new life. In spite of all, the majority soon settled down happily, though a few were lonely and refused to be comforted. They disliked country life, they disliked their hosts, they hated their new food and they sighed for the friendship of their familiar public houses and the tumultuous street life of overcrowded London. When it became known in Bristol that many of the newcomers lacked clothing and other necessities, action was at once taken. Several days before the Town Clerk received a request for help from the Ministry of Health an appeal was made through the local Press. This was followed up on the following Sunday by exhortations from the pulpits of churches and chapels throughout the city that the congregations should remember the need of the Londoners. The response was quick and splendid. Many tons of household gear, clothing, toys and crockery were collected and distributed in a few days, together with more than 300 perambulators.

In spite of all that had been done by September 1939 there were still many shortages to be made good and others rapidly showed themselves. The Home Office, the Ministry of Health and other departments, both regional and central, were flooded

with requests for material and equipment of all kinds, with expostulations and entreaties. Here it must be acknowledged that the officials in Whitehall found themselves in a very awkward situation. It was their duty to see that public money should not be squandered and that substantial justice was done to every locality. So all requirements were carefully scrutinized. With the best will in the world they could not meet more than a fraction of what they now recognized to be reasonable and justifiable demands. Local authorities, however, were equally unfortunate for it was their duty to press the particular needs of their areas. They were responsible for the safety of their people and they dreaded the effect of serious enemy attack if it should find them unprepared. In consequence, there were prolonged discussions about food, equipment, expenses and shelters. Indeed, the experience of these years proved the truth of Disraeli's words. If centralization did not in fact give the death-blow to public freedom it did unquestionably hamper the efficiency of local government.

Suitable cellars were surveyed and strengthened, more street shelters were constructed, but a good deal of delay was caused by the shortage of bricks. Within a few weeks of the outbreak of war it was stated that there was enough trench shelter accommodation to meet the needs of 21,000 people and that when the work then in hand was completed there would be room for 25,000 more; but the provision of domestic shelters was far from satisfactory. Thus, by 12 December, only 1250 Andersons were then in the hands of the contractors, 800 awaited the receipt of missing parts and 8000 were still to be supplied. The average cost of erecting these humble, though on the whole efficient, refuges was put at 30s. each and the total number finally supplied in the city was 41,450. Meanwhile private enterprise supplemented the efforts of the authorities and a familiar topic of conversation was the respective advantages or defects of the various substances which people began to stick on their windows to protect them against broken glass. With their sand-bags heaped about them, their brick protective outworks, their "Cellophane" windows and shored-up interiors, private houses assumed the appearance of small fortresses.

The equipment of the Control centres, the Wardens and all other services proceeded. Indeed, during the first six weeks of

the war, the civil defence machine was once more overhauled from top to bottom and when spring came it was far more efficient and flexible than it had been in the preceding September. Many problems, however, still remained, perhaps the most trying of which was the problem of manpower. In fact this continued to vex the minds of the chiefs of the fighting forces, industry and civil defence throughout the war.

Although the outbreak of hostilities gave a temporary stimulus to A.R.P. recruitment the enthusiasm soon waned and week by week fewer and fewer men and women came forward while resignations grew in number. By the beginning of December the situation was so bad that the Regional Commissioner addressed a special message to all civil defence workers: "Every volunteer who throws in his hand now," he said, "means one point scored by the other side—one point up to the leaders of Germany—and that just won't do. There is only a very thin line of division between ourselves who serve in the civil defence forces and our brethren who serve in the fighting forces of the Crown. A very great number of these are also waiting for something to happen. They too have been in a constant state of readiness. But in regard to all of us there is in the mind of the enemy the hope that the war of nerves or, as I think it might be better called, the war of boredom and waiting will relax our efforts, take the edge off our keenness and reduce our determination."

These grave words, apparently, were taken to heart, for, though there was still some grumbling, the King when he inspected the civil defence forces of Bristol in February expressed great satisfaction.

At first the blackout was defective, though it soon improved. It became a matter of pride for a householder to be "blacker" than his neighbour and the spotting of "gleams" was a popular pastime for people returning home late at night. Not everyone was zealous in this matter, however, and by 10 November 248 people had been proceeded against for blackout offences. Every light which showed during the time of darkness gave rise to the most lurid stories, but worse than tiny gleams, which the R.A.F. apparently considered to be of no importance, was the stimulus which the blackout gave to pilfering, rowdyism, wanton damage to shelters and the defacement of walls. It was difficult for the

police to bring all the wrongdoers to account, but still more serious was the number of accidents which occurred. All these things combined to produce a movement in favour of some modification of the blackout, and this seemed justifiable, since there appeared to be no immediate likelihood of air attack. After prolonged deliberation, it was agreed, early in January 1940, that a modified form of street lighting should be authorized. The experts now declared that light of an intensity of 0.00025 foot candles on the ground could safely be left burning during an air raid.

On the outbreak of war a number of cars and vehicles were at once commandeered by the military and by the civil defence authorities, but when it was found that many of these were standing idle in expectation of an attack that did not develop their owners quite naturally became dissatisfied. Some of these vehicles were therefore returned, but the problem was not solved. One of the most serious needs of the Medical Officer of Health was still for ambulances. Whitehall had long since promised him a satisfactory number, but so far had delivered none. To meet this need a few second-hand cars were purchased, some trailers were ordered, and the building of ambulance bodies in Bristol was put in hand.

From time to time, young men and women came home on leave from camps in Britain, or from France, but still the war seemed unreal and far off. There was an air raid warning in November but no attack, and, even when people heard that the enemy had visited other parts of the country, Bristol continued to consider herself safe. Poland had been crushed, it was true, but the war in France was a stalemate and some people were beginning to think that American critics were right. It was a "phony" war. Perhaps there would be no real war after all, perhaps Hitler's threats were only bluster.

Hitler may have been bluffing so far as war on land and in the air was concerned, but from the very beginning it was apparent that the war at sea was deadly. Week by week, the toll of British merchantmen mounted. For a short time the magnetic mine caused consternation, but it was quickly mastered and the Battle of the River Plate, which culminated in the scuttling of the *Graf Spee* in December, proved that the Royal Navy had not lost its quality, a belief that was strengthened,

when, a few months later, 299 Britons were rescued from the German prison-ship *Altmark* in Norwegian waters. This was war right enough but it was the kind of war that everyone understood, not the horrid cataclysm conjured up in the minds of civilians by the bombing of open cities and poison gas.

The experience of the last war showed the supreme importance of producing as much foodstuff as possible in the country. Clearly the Germans would try to cut off Great Britain's supplies from abroad and so bring her to her knees. In the second volume of his history of the war, Mr. Churchill emphasizes the gravity of this problem. The growing of food was a form of war work in which ordinary citizens felt that they could help and they threw themselves with zest into a task which was both pleasant and important. During the period of hostilities, allotment holders made a substantial contribution to the food supplies of the city. There were 7782 of them prior to the war, and 13,364 in 1943. Meanwhile, the authorities were determined that every available acre of open space suitable for cultivation should be put under the plough. At first, in their eagerness to grow more food, they tended to forget other human needs, and, if this movement had not been arrested in time, all the open spaces in the city might have been turned into potato patches. There were 202 acres under the plough at the outbreak of war, and 532 acres at the end of March 1943. The Bristol Food Control Committee was set up in May 1939, and a special Food Campaign Week was organized at the end of April 1940.

While Bristol was doing her utmost to help herself, she was not forgotten by her friends. In January, the W.V.S. received gifts of clothing from the Canadian Branch of the Independent Order of Daughters of the Empire, and in March the Toronto Bristolian Society sent money to buy comforts for the troops. These were merely the first of a flood of gifts from the Commonwealth and Empire and from the United States and other countries, which did so much to sustain the morale of the city.

Queen Mary, who had taken up her residence at Badminton House, the country seat of the Duke of Beaufort, became a familiar figure. She was quite indefatigable in her solicitude for the general well-being. Indeed, before the war was over, she

had become, in the minds of the people, the most distinguished of their fellow citizens and no longer merely a very important royal person.

So, while the factories hummed, while innumerable committees discussed and "Lord Haw Haw"—as the traitor Joyce was dubbed—provided his nightly comic entertainment from Germany, the period of the twilight war ended and Bristol entered the dramatic spring of 1940.

## V

### THE WAR COMES TO BRISTOL

THE year 1940 more than justified all that the poets had written of the English spring. The countryside about Bristol, little affected as yet by war, was never more beautiful. Tired men and women from factory, office and loquacious committee meeting sought relaxation in its quiet places, where they found rest and the evils of the time receded. Those who had the good fortune to escape from the clamour of the city for a few hours and walk once more the familiar paths of Gloucestershire, or ride up over Blackdown and across Mendip in that glorious spring weather, often recalled this pleasant time in the grim months that followed.

Spring had scarcely come to the West Country before it was made plain that the war had entered upon a new phase. Denmark passed under German control in a single night, Norway was overrun and, before summer came in, the British force that had been sent there with such high hopes was compelled to withdraw. Without waiting to consolidate these gains, Hitler turned with his hordes upon fresh prey. Holland was struck down before she could organize her resistance, and large sections of the historic city of Rotterdam whose greatness, like that of Bristol, was built on maritime enterprise, became a heap of rubble. Belgium was attacked and occupied for the second time in a generation.

Meanwhile, in England, the popular dissatisfaction with the Government that had been increasing throughout the winter became irresistible. Neville Chamberlain was compelled to lay down the burden which had proved too heavy for him to bear, and a coalition of all parties was formed. Winston Churchill became Prime Minister, and the nation breathed a sigh of relief. At last it had a leader whom it could trust.

By May the war was coming nearer; the false sense of security, engendered by the belief that this city was out of the

enemy's reach and would never be anything more than a spectator on the side line, was shattered. Bristol was now to be in the game. But, for a few days in mid-May, it seemed that the German flood might be arrested and even thrown back. The British army moved forward and received a jubilant welcome from the Belgian people whom it had come to save. The French also advanced; but this flicker of hope was soon extinguished. The British were forced to retire while the French armies reeled under savage blows that were rained upon them by their ancient enemy. Then the Belgian King surrendered with his whole army; the British left flank was exposed and unprotected; the enemy swept across France to the Channel and the British force with all its equipment was imperilled.

These grim tidings were heard in Bristol with profound sadness, but the work in the factories and mills never flagged, for that sense of urgency which had been lacking in recent months now inspired the whole nation. With Belgium beaten, France fighting for her life and the Allied armies in full retreat, it became plain to the people of Bristol that there was some sense after all in the Regional Commissioner's repeated exhortations to them to carry their gas-masks and to make sure that they knew the whereabouts of the nearest shelter and first aid post. The Emergency Committee, the A.R.P. Committee and all the other bodies to which reference has already been made, pressed on with their preparations. With inadequate supplies of cement and other materials and with an insufficient labour force, the construction of shelters went forward, but the evil effects of the long period of inaction were painfully evident. Every branch of the civil defence force was under strength and recruitment was still unsatisfactory.

Hospitals were cleared in order that there should be room for casualties; Bristol was ordered to be ready for the reception of refugees, and it was not long before people arrived from London, the south coast, the Channel Islands and other places. Public baths were turned into temporary hostels and the Lord Mayor set up a special committee to deal with this new problem. When, at Whitsuntide, Corporation offices remained open, people said ruefully that things must be very serious indeed. As the threat to the ports of the south and east of the island developed, more and more burdens were thrown on Bristol and preparations



were put in hand for the reception of numbers of dock labourers.

It was at this time that the force at first known as the Local Defence Volunteers, was born. On 14 May, Mr. Eden in a speech broadcast to the nation, called upon all able-bodied men between the ages of seventeen and sixty-five to assist in the defence of the country. The folk-in-arms were to guard the land again, as they had in the days of Napoleon, in the time of Philip II and, indeed, in the remote Anglo-Saxon past. In 1940 there were hundreds of thousands of men in Britain, who, while they continued to carry on their normal work in factory, office and field, had for some time been anxious to take a more direct share in the war than had so far been possible. They were vigorous and active. Many of them had served in the 1914-18 war and they now wanted to place that experience at their country's service. This was their opportunity and they seized it with avidity.

After Mr. Eden's broadcast they flocked in their hundreds to the police stations of Bristol to fill in their application forms. Indeed, the rush was so great that before long the supply of these documents was exhausted. This, coupled with the time necessarily taken in scrutinizing the credentials of each volunteer, led to delays and to some temporary irritation among the patriots eager for battle.

Major Sidney Clifford and Captain Talbot Plum, having sworn each other in, set about the task of raising units of Local Defence Volunteers for service in Bristol. Each unit was to be organized on a Company basis and each Company was to be sub-divided into Sections, but there were to be no military ranks. Of the five Companies raised in Bristol one was specifically charged with the protection of Filton aerodrome, while each of the remaining four was assigned to a police division. On 20 May, a number of officers who had served in the 1914-18 war were invited to a meeting at Territorial Army Headquarters. There the scheme was explained to them and they were asked to help. The result was that the companies raised in Bristol were provided from the outset with experienced commanders. Indeed, the subsequent growth and quality of the Home Guard, as the force was termed in August 1940, owes almost everything to these gallant officers and to the N.C.O.s who gathered round them.

It seems fairly evident that the Government itself was somewhat vague as to the nature of the new force it had called into existence. Certainly, in May 1940, no one had any conception of the size to which the Home Guard was to grow, or of the important place in the defence system of the country it was destined to assume. The instructions issued to commanders may be taken as a fair indication of the slight significance which some higher military dignitaries attached to the new body. They also provide some impression of the enormous difficulties under which the officers had to work. Looking back on the events of 1940, one Home Guard battalion commander thus summarized the orders he received: "You are to provide yourself with a headquarters, you should have a telephone; public expenditure cannot be sanctioned; you may not requisition premises; here are 10s. to cover your first month's postage." Undaunted by this official cold douche, Major Clifford and his officers went on with their task.

Like everything else, weapons at first were scarce. In fact, after the withdrawal from Dunkirk, the army itself was woefully in need of tanks, guns, rifles, ammunition and military equipment of all kinds; before anything could be done for the L.D.V., therefore, the army had to be rearmed. In the meantime, the new force was obliged to content itself with shot-guns, rifles borrowed from Officers' Training Corps, and, indeed, with any kind of weapon which could be made to fire and for which ammunition could be found. In some parts of the country the men managed as best they could with a strange array of lethal weapons, the military value of which was, to say the least of it, dubious.

In Bristol a few machine guns were available, partly manned by members of the University Officers' Training Corps. As for other equipment, it was picked up here, there and everywhere. Field-glasses, spy-glasses and binoculars of many types, both ancient and modern, ranging down almost to opera-glasses, were pressed into service. The public was eager to help, for, from the beginning, the L.D.V. enjoyed great popularity. Typewriters were offered, some of them exceedingly venerable, but all were put to use, for to have a machine of any kind, however antique, was a great luxury.

In the early days the force had no premises of its own, so it

stored the few weapons it was able to collect in police stations. Another question that demanded an answer was the method of calling the men to arms if an invasion occurred. As they were scattered in factory, office and shop throughout the city during the day, and in their homes at night, it was hard to bring them together quickly, and so the traditional practice of ringing the church bells was proposed.

The Englishman is notably adaptable, as the history of his colonization throughout the world proves. Seldom has this quality been displayed in greater measure than it was by the officers and N.C.O.s who built up the Home Guard, and their zeal was unbounded. Within five months of its establishment the strength of one company stood at 2000 men, and when the force reached its maximum size in Bristol it numbered 13,500 of all ranks. The five original L.D.V. companies grew into nine Home Guard Battalions of the Gloucestershire Regiment and four "Z" Batteries of Anti-Aircraft Command. Each battalion was provided with the normal complement of officers who were gazetted to Home Guard commissions, and Colonel A. F. Chapman was appointed Zone, later Area, Commander. Some Home Guard officers and men were transferred to the heavy anti-aircraft batteries, in which they distinguished themselves by their accurate shooting. As time went on, shortages in weapons and other equipment were made up and the eager desire for action became more controlled.

To begin with the L.D.V. was assigned a purely defensive role. The Government was anxious to apply the lessons taught by the German seizure of Holland, where considerable use of parachute troops had been made. Each company was to confine its scope to its own particular locality; it manned observation posts, watched for airborne invasions, provided road patrols, constructed road blocks in order to screen traffic and prevent parachute troops from entering the city. The force was also to furnish guards for important buildings and other places, but when it came to fighting, this was to be done by the regular army.

During the closing stages of the war, however, if the need had arisen the defence of the city would have been undertaken mainly by the Home Guard acting under the operational control of the garrison commander. This fact is the more note-

worthy when it is remembered that every officer and man, in addition to his Home Guard duties, carried on his normal full-time work. As will be seen in the later chapters of this book, the Home Guard not only performed its routine tasks, but, in addition, it aided the civil defence services in many ways. Indeed, close co-operation was maintained throughout the war between the two forces, and by 1945 a considerable amount of reciprocal training had been carried out. This, coupled with the assumption of regular anti-aircraft duties by certain sections of the Home Guard, probably gave rise to the groundless rumour that this force was about to absorb the civil defence services and that it was itself soon to become part of the regular army.

The popularity of the Home Guard was such that recruitment for civil defence services declined still further. The Lord Mayor and the Regional Commissioner, therefore, made a joint appeal for volunteers to man the different branches of the civil defence organization. Meanwhile, the Government was combing the very services for which recruits were required, but to satisfy the needs of industry, civil defence and the fighting forces was an impossibility.

In Bristol, while many wished to fight, whatever obstacles might stand in the way, whether of age, physical condition, or special employment, there were a few who were equally determined to avoid war service of any kind. With the adoption of the system of conscription in the summer of 1939, a Conscientious Objectors' Tribunal was set up and, in the ensuing months, the proceedings of this body provided a mild form of entertainment to many a casual visitor who attended its sittings. Before it appeared a motley assortment of individuals who, for the most part, were sincere enough, but their reasoning and their sectarian idiosyncrasies were amazing. Whatever the onlookers may have thought of the objectors themselves, they were all impressed by the fair-mindedness of the chairman and his colleagues and they came away with a heightened respect for British justice. A country that was so careful to safeguard the rights of those of its citizens who refused to serve it when there was most need for their help was worth fighting for. From time to time during the war, public clamour against conscientious objectors arose but quickly subsided. Thus, in the summer of

1940 when the invasion of Britain seemed probable, an unnecessary amount of attention and a quite unreasonable amount of wrath were directed against this handful of citizens, but on this occasion there were no white feathers as there had been in 1914. To the disgust of their more patriotic mates, numbers of them were employed by the Corporation as well as by private firms. Their employers valued their labour power, even though their political opinions were obnoxious. It is true that some of the objectors were unnecessarily aggressive in their pacificism and the result of this was that, during the summer, feeling reached such a pitch that some firms felt constrained to dismiss these unpopular members of their staffs. Such a policy, however, clearly outraged the very principles for which the country was fighting, for, even if the pacifist's anxiety to win a martyr's crown was nauseating, he had a right to his own opinions. So the President of the Free Church Federal Council wrote a letter of protest to the Press against these dismissals, and this led in turn to a wordy correspondence, but amongst all these trials Bristol kept her head. While she deplored the views of the conscientious objectors, she was determined that there should be no persecution.

Fascists belonged to quite another category. They were, in fact, a revolutionary group resolved upon the subversion of the constitution and in alliance with an alien, that became, in June 1940, a hostile power. Their leaders were, therefore, rounded up and imprisoned and the movement was suppressed. The activities of the Communists at the opposite extreme were carefully watched, for they, as usual, were out to sabotage the national effort, to spread despondency and so produce the conditions of misery which would make possible their revolution.

By the end of May, however, there were vastly more important matters to engage the attention of Bristol than the odd behaviour of conscientious objectors, the tricks of Fascists and the schemes of the Communists. France was faced with defeat. She might be compelled to surrender and so would pass under German control, though Britons found it hard to believe that this was possible. Europe without France free and resilient was unthinkable, and even when she fell, the people of England, who knew and loved her, believed that she would rise again. When all hope of successful French resistance had vanished,

Italy decided that the time had come when she might stab her sister Latin nation in the back and so ensure her fall. This was a moment for which the Duce had waited and when Italy entered the war the Italians were ready for aggressive action in Africa. But sad reflections about the fate of a gallant ally were quickly submerged in the public mind by more immediate worries. It was rumoured not only that France would capitulate but that the whole British army might be forced to surrender. As Lord Gort fell back on Dunkirk, Britain mobilized her little ships to save her army.

Four well-known Bristol pleasure steamers, the *Brighton Queen*, the *Brighton Belle*, the *Devonia* and the *Glendower* shared in the great task of rescue. These vessels, which had turned minesweeper at the beginning of the war, were called from that dangerous work for this pressing and even more hazardous assignment. The *Devonia* was driven ashore in order to provide a screen for the embarking troops, the *Brighton Queen* and the *Brighton Belle* went down under a rain of bombs and the *Glendower* returned home in safety but with a gaping hole in her bows just above water line.

The epic story of that miraculous escape of the entire army does not concern us here except in so far as it affected Bristol. Tired, but by no means dispirited, soldiers poured into the city and, when all available barrack space was occupied, an emergency camp was established in Eastville Park, but still there was not enough room, so the citizens threw their homes open. Private houses became temporary hostels where men queued up for baths and meals; confectioners emptied their shops in their generous desire to feed the returned heroes. For several days thereafter, while the roar of the factories grew in intensity, a spirit almost of carnival prevailed. If a stranger, ignorant of the circumstances, had visited the town at that time, he would have found it hard to believe that the country had just sustained one of the greatest military reverses in its long history, for when the army had been successfully brought home the effect on the national spirit was not very different from that of a resounding victory.

No one now thought of Bristol as a mere spectator on the side line, for with the French coast in German hands she was brought under the German fighter umbrella. This was a

singularly infelicitous term since, unlike the humble protective "gamp," this grisly umbrella was designed to ensure that the deadly rain should reach its mark. As that lovely spring passed into a brilliant summer, Bristol quickly discovered the meaning of her changed position, and now, under Mr. Churchill's dynamic leadership, the new Government was showing an energy and resource such as the country had not known for many a year. In a series of noble speeches that recalled the golden age of English oratory, he poured contempt upon the enemy and inspired his fellow countrymen. At that moment he was the living embodiment of the British will to survive and triumph.

Much has been written about the spirit of 1940 and there has doubtless been some exaggeration which in turn has stimulated cynical disparagement. It is none the less true that the greatness of Britain was never more evident than it was then. The knowledge that with the Commonwealth and Empire overseas the country now stood alone, the last great bastion of liberty in Europe, upon whose fortunes depended the future of all free men, united the nation as it had probably never been united before. In those momentous summer months Great Britain recaptured the spirit of the first Elizabethan age and the men and women who faced Hitler were fired by the same desperate courage as that which had braced their ancestors against the Armada of Philip II. The terrible odds against her were obvious to all, but there was no thought of defeat or surrender. The nation knew that the alternatives which now confronted it were victory or destruction, but people were not depressed unduly by this grave situation. On the contrary, they were uplifted as if they were about to enter a game in which the opposing team was fabulously strong. It is not implied here that England faced the task which now lay before her in a frivolous spirit, but it is true that, at this juncture in her affairs, her ingrained addiction to games stood her in good stead. Indeed, her army had been preserved from annihilation in part, at least, by the sportsmanship as well as the courage of the men of all conditions who manned the little ships. In the post-war period pride of country has once more fallen into disrepute and according to some moderns it is an undesirable survival from the bad old times, but many who knew England then, resolute and unafraid,

# EMERGENCY SERVICE



Local Defence Volunteers (later the Home Guard)—18 June 1940.

Women's Land Army—11 December 1942.



King George VI and Queen Elizabeth inspect the British Red Cross—9 February 1940.





## SET-BACK AND SURVIVAL



Dunkirk survivors were in Bristol on 3 June 1940 . . . and evacuee children passed through Temple Meads . . . and war work in the factories was redoubled. These were Beauforts at the B.A.C.

have often been heartened since, in times of gloom and depression, when they recalled that glorious renaissance.

Since invasion might come at any moment, it was desirable that any evidence which might aid the enemy to identify the locality in which he found himself should disappear both in town and country. Thus, in conversation with strangers, people suddenly became surprisingly ignorant of the neighbourhood in which they had spent their lives. The Home Guard was on its toes and full of fight. It was fortunate for many an innocent traveller by night, during the months of June, July and August, that the greater number of these stalwart defenders of hearth and home had as yet no triggers to press. When arms came the first fine careless rapture was suitably restrained by discipline.

Night by night, Joyce and his infamous crew polluted the air with their hateful pleadings, while Hitler completed the subjugation of France. Like a greater would-be conqueror of the world, he stood on Cap Griz Nez and cast longing eyes on the gleaming cliffs of England behind which the country was feverishly rearming. All were profoundly moved by these great events, but ordinary work had still to go on. The Bristol Emergency Committee calmly discussed the question of annual holidays for the civil defence forces and for Corporation employees; it spent some time on the problem of the coal supplies of the city but, as after events were to prove, the result of these discussions was not all that could have been wished. Trespass in shelters, oversight of aliens, the problem of empty houses, the movement of motor cars during air raids, were the kind of questions which filled its time. This was as it should have been, for, if the country was to survive its ordeal, such humdrum, but essential, work had to be done.

Bristol now, in common with many other parts of the country, learned a great deal about rumours. Fantastic stories of German invasions, pending or already achieved, circulated freely and, as in the first World War, the sinister figure of the German spy bulked largely in these stories. Most common of all was the enemy dressed up as a Catholic nun, who appeared in so many surprising and ingenious ways that people competed with each other to produce the largest number of such pseudo-ecclesiastical manifestations. Besides the nun, the German came in many forms and, if the enemy secret service had been half as intelli-

gent as some people now believed it to be, England certainly would not have survived. It is true there were no Russian troops this time with snow still on their boots at King's Cross, but there were many other stories equally absurd. "Lord Haw Haw" did his utmost to strengthen the conviction that the country was riddled with Fifth Column activities and that, for all people knew, their nearest and dearest might be in German pay. "How could he know," people asked, "that a particular church clock was a quarter of an hour slow, or that a certain speaker had made such and such a statement at a public meeting?" The answer, of course, was simple enough: he was reading British newspapers which had reached him by way of Southern Ireland. Rumour became almost a fetish and the campaign to combat it was taken up with such zeal that it amounted to a menace itself. Every man, woman and child in the country was to join the Silent Column to fight rumour and defeatist gossip. When, however, an old man of over seventy was sent to prison for seven days as a warning to others, because he acknowledged that he had spoken in a manner that was likely to cause alarm and despondency, Bristolians felt that things were going too far. Towards the end of July, therefore, when the Prime Minister announced the death of the Silent Column, there was widespread relief. Although the intention behind it was sound enough, it might have put a ban on reasonable discussion and deprived the Englishman of his dearest privilege—the right to grumble. By then, moreover, it was evident that Joyce and his colleagues did not in fact know much, the censorship was effective, the Fifth Column in England was a bogey, and British journalists saw to it that nothing was published which could possibly be of any use to the enemy, or indeed of much use to the historian of Bristol at war.

It was seen that the best way to discount rumour was to ensure that the public was supplied with reliable, up-to-date information and, with this end in view, a Local Information Committee was set up. Like similiar bodies elsewhere in the country, it contained journalists, representatives of the Ministry of Information, the City Council, the political parties, various religious and other bodies. Its aim was to assist in the dissemination of information and, speaking broadly, it made some

contribution to that end. Before many weeks were past, it had an elaborate machine under its control and its group leaders were prepared to assist in the distribution of information passed on to them. In the course of time it acquired another function. This was the communication to the appropriate public departments of significant information, which the Committee received from its group leaders. By this means it was possible to maintain a firm grip on the pulse of the city and to deal with undesirable symptoms as soon as they showed themselves. Like other departments, the Ministry of Information came under the fire of public ridicule and probably had more than its share. If its detractors had been more familiar with the facts, they might well have been more measured in their abuse. Even if the Bristol Local Information Committee did nothing else, it enabled disgruntled men and women to air their views, as they undoubtedly did, to their hearts' content.

One of the most persistent suggestions made at this time was that the various hills of the city should be tunnelled. It was argued that if this was done thousands of people would be safe against the greatest bombs that the enemy could drop. The Communists used this proposal as a whip with which to chastise the authorities. Let the bombproof shelters be opened for human beings, not documents, and if those responsible for the city's safety would not do the tunnelling, then the people should do it themselves. Just how the people were to do it, however, was never explained. In fact, some at least of the critics were more concerned to increase the worries of the local authority than to safeguard the public good. Such, then, was Bristol in June 1940, when enemy raiding began.

## VI

### UNDER FIRE

ON 20 June 1940 enemy planes appeared over Portishead and dropped ten bombs. Five days later the city had her first air raid and the enemy's target was the railway station. The districts of St. Philip's, St. Paul's, and Brislington were the chief sufferers, but Temple Meads was clearly aimed at, as nine high explosives were dropped on near-by railway property. Their effect was, however, surprisingly slight. Altogether, including a number of unexploded bombs, Bristol was hit fifty times in this raid; five citizens were killed, and thirty-three were injured. So, at last, after months of waiting, after much tedium and frustration, the civil defence services realized that they would be of some use. Their first experience of genuine air raid conditions showed them the value of their training and they came through their baptism of fire with increased confidence in themselves and their leaders.

This raid established the reputation of Anderson shelters, which provided adequate protection against blast and shrapnel. It was not until the winter rains set in that their serious defects were revealed. Throughout the whole summer, therefore, people clamoured for more Andersons. The cry for deep shelters grew louder and some people were quite ready to stop war work altogether while the whole energies of the city were devoted to vast tunnelling programmes. Meanwhile the authorities, unperturbed by this unreasoning noise, pushed forward the construction of street shelters, although greatly hampered by the lack of building materials. It was not until autumn came that supplies of cement were reported to be satisfactory.

On the last day of June a raid on the aeroplane works at Filton occurred, and it was symptomatic of things to come that four bombs were dropped on purely residential areas. One person died of shock and one warden was injured, but otherwise this second raid achieved very little.

Several buildings at Filton were damaged on 4 July and Gloucester Road was blocked by debris for some hours. Eight civilians and three R.A.F. men were injured. Though the courage of the city was still high, these first raids caused some apprehension among particular sections of the population. As they did not know all the facts, they assumed that the defences of the city were inadequate and that the failure to extinguish lights in and about the railway yards attracted the invaders' attention. Everyone was, of course, well aware of the enormous losses in war weapons which were sustained in the Battle of France, but a few unthinking critics seemed to consider that this lack could be made up overnight. The garrison commander did his best to calm these apprehensions. He denied that guns had been taken away from Bristol, though some had been moved. In spite of all he could say, the uneasiness remained. The plain fact was, of course, that England did not have enough arms to defend herself, and only time and hard work could make up this tragic want. It was necessary that goods should be moved, air raids or not, and, beyond a certain point, lighting could not be reduced unless all activities were to stop. People in the neighbourhood were therefore told that they must reconcile themselves to the fact that they lived in a dangerous area.

Although air raid warnings continued there was little other damage beyond that caused by the loss of a dozen barrage balloons in a thunderstorm on 12 July. Two days later the railways and war factories of the city were attacked again. From the 15th to the 25th the sirens were constantly sounding. On this latter day, an enemy plane was brought down in Gloucestershire, which gave great satisfaction to all in Bristol. In this same month attacks were made on Clevedon, Portishead, Avonmouth and the Bristol Channel region in general. By now the French coast was firmly held by Germany, and the English ports of the south and east, including London, were paralysed. While the enemy kept this area under strict surveillance, he devoted more attention to the communications system and the factories of the west. During the month of July, in fact, his aim appeared to be to dislocate transport, to make a reconnaissance of coastal and inland defences and to cause widespread anxiety among the civil population.

During the summer the attack on British shipping, which had started on the first day of the war, was intensified, and Mr. Churchill has since shown how perilous the situation was. Fortunately, the nation as a whole had little knowledge of the terrible threat to its existence, but there were indications of this danger in the summer of 1940. In a letter to the Press on 16 July, the catering trade announced that, in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Food, one principal course only would be served at meals in future. This might consist of meat, fish, poultry, game or offal. All menus were to be simplified and the number of dishes from which a choice could be made would be reduced. *Hors-d'œuvre*, sweets, cheese and vegetables might, however, be served in addition. When this announcement was made, the gastronomes of Bristol breathed a nostalgic sigh of regret for the good days that were gone. They tightened their belts and marched sadly forward into the age of austerity.

Another sign of the times was the attitude of the Government to private property. Henceforward, an Englishman's house was no longer to be his castle, or, at any rate, the castle was not to be inviolable. If the Government thought such a thing desirable, war-damaged property would be repaired irrespective of the owner's wishes. Even convinced Socialists resented this authoritarianism, for by nature most Bristolians are individualists at heart. Some ardent spirits pretended to see in these things, as they had already seen in the appointment of a Regional Commissioner, a dangerous threat to British liberty, but the majority accepted them as they accepted other restraints on the exercise of their cherished rights. They were nuisances, but they were all part of the unavoidable cost of war and must be borne, though detested.

All this time the work of salvage went on and the record of Bristol in the first year of the war was on the whole satisfactory. Between November 1939 and June 1940, 2348 tons of waste paper were collected; during the first six months of the war the materials salvaged were valued at £2282; 700 tons of tram lines were pulled up and sold; ten tons of paper and one ton of bones were collected through the schools each week but, by July, only forty per cent of Bristol's householders had responded to the appeal for the salvage of kitchen waste. Much of the

credit for these good results was due to the tireless efforts of the W.V.S., without whose aid the greater part of this work could never have been done.

After six weeks of alarms and attacks Bristol found herself at the end of July little the worse for her experience. There had been some destruction of property; there had been a number of casualties, a few of which were fatal, and this was regrettable but on the whole the city was fortunate. In some ways these attacks had been of definite benefit. They had terminated the period of lassitude and they had slowly accustomed the civilian population to the conditions of aerial bombardment.

Hitler still hoped for peace with Britain. He was convinced that the great German victories of spring and early summer, and the samples of German bombing which England had received, would persuade the country to capitulate. The Germans could not believe that Britain would still go on fighting what was to them so clearly a hopeless war. On 1 August therefore, an enemy plane flying very high dropped leaflets on southern England, some of which fell in the vicinity of Bristol. These contained an English translation of a speech delivered by the Führer to the Reichstag on 19 July. It was entitled *A Last Appeal to Reason*. In it the German leader entreated the English to give up a hopeless struggle, and to accept the generous terms which he was prepared to offer. But to his surprise the British people could not understand "reason" as interpreted by him. When, therefore, the nation that he believed already half-beaten eagerly collected his leaflets for the paper salvage drive and laughed uproariously at the appeal they contained, his tone changed. The Battle of Britain began and, with it, another phase in aerial bombardment. As that epic battle grew in intensity the Italians were, for the moment, triumphant in Africa. They overran British Somaliland in August, and, worse still, a powerful Italian army crossed the Egyptian frontier on 13 September, near the town of Sollum. The small opposing British force was thrown back and on the 17th the enemy entered Sidi Barrani where he was at last halted.

Although, for the moment, the grand aim of the Luftwaffe was the annihilation of the Royal Air Force, the attack on war factories and the transport system of the country continued. Alerts constantly recurred throughout August and bombs fell



on the Bristol Control area on twelve occasions; 134 high explosives were reported and there were doubtless others, but the precise number of incendiary bombs is unknown. Shirehampton, Stoke Bishop, Westbury-on-Trym, Filton and Bedminster Down suffered most, but Clifton, Redland, St. Paul's, Brislington and other parts of the city also felt the wrath of the enemy. Three attacks were made on Avonmouth, but though one factory was put out of action for a short time, no vital part of the port was affected. During this month also the Bristol Aeroplane Company's works at Filton came under enemy fire on three occasions and on one of these the destruction was considerable. In one factory, production was held up for some time while others were damaged to a lesser degree. Many houses in the vicinity were destroyed. Instead of breaking the British will to resist, however, the German effort had quite the contrary effect. In those brilliant weeks of late summer the Royal Air Force, inferior to the Luftwaffe in numbers, proved itself to be the enemy's superior in every other respect. Its daily toll of hostile planes, though at the time exaggerated, was great and certainly cheered the country.

For the first few weeks after enemy attacks began, the factory workers, in accordance with the instructions they had been given, dropped their work and sought shelter as soon as the alert sounded. But this scuttling off to safety quickly lost its novelty and was much disliked by both workers and managements. As many alerts might occur in the course of the same shift without any subsequent raid resulting, war work was slowed up. If this interference was allowed to continue, it would cause a serious decline in production. In order to prevent this, a system of roof spotting was evolved during the summer, which steadily improved in efficiency in the ensuing months. In this way, though enemy aircraft were known to be in the neighbourhood, work went on until the roof spotters decided that an attack was certain. Before the winter was over, many factories were able to report that, despite alerts and raids, only a few minutes had been lost in a whole week. As it was essential that all crops should be harvested, schoolchildren, factory workers on holiday and people of all ages and conditions, who could be spared from their regular work, assisted in bringing in the grain, picking fruit and digging potatoes.

While England was thus working in a manner which surprised not only her friends but herself, highly coloured and wholly false accounts of the state of the country were poured out nightly by the German propaganda machine. The British fighting spirit was broken, Bristol and other cities were in ruins, factory workers were on the verge of revolution and so on and so on. In order that the outside world should know the truth, foreign journalists were invited to come down and see for themselves. Thus a group of American and Dominion newspapermen were enabled to examine conditions as they really were. These visitors were astounded by what they saw and heard, and it was not long before people in distant parts of the world were full of praise for the old city on the Avon.

On 16 August, Regulation 16A was extended to the whole of Britain. By this measure, Regional Commissioners were empowered, when the need arose, and subject to certain safeguards, to assume control, but now there was no complaint about the threat to British liberties—at least the Germans had taught that lesson. In view of the gravity of the enemy onslaught it was decided at the end of August that the system of partial street lighting upon which so much money had been spent could not be used after all; the blackout must remain complete. Even at this critical time, there were still some householders so foolish as to go on showing their lights; the instruction to carry gas-masks was still largely ignored and in consequence much unnecessary work was imposed upon the magistrates and the police.

In September the violence of German bombing increased. Although there had been some casualties, the number so far killed was small. From now onwards the records abound with such entries as: two killed, three killed, five killed. There were larger numbers of injuries, some of which were serious. Day by day, the list of houses totally or partially destroyed, lengthened and, as this occurred, the authorities were confronted with the problem of finding accommodation for the homeless and making damaged houses habitable again. Alerts were sometimes sounded on account of enemy planes that came over the city to observe the effect of previous raids.

Meanwhile the British armament drive was mounting, and equipment of all sorts was beginning to pour from the assembly

lines. The army was being rapidly rearmed and before the middle of September, Goering saw that the Royal Air Force could not be destroyed as he had thought. His own losses were terrible; but Hitler was still bent on the invasion of Britain. His propaganda machine had announced in early July that he would be in London on 15 August. That day came and went, but no Germans landed in the island except as prisoners of war or dead men. In September rumour was unusually busy about the alleged German invasion which, it is now known, was never even attempted. But these stories merely strengthened the British determination to fight on.

Bristol's War Weapons Week, which opened on 14 September, provided a good illustration of civic feeling at this time. People of all classes invested to the limit of their resources. Banks, business houses, great industrial firms, supplemented the subscriptions of private individuals. In the course of the week £890,000 were subscribed and, when the fund was finally closed, the total had reached £1,490,000. The A.R.P. Wardens' Service on its own initiative raised enough money to pay for two Spitfires.

Bristol had her first heavy attack on the morning of 25 September. About sixty enemy bombers with fighter escort appeared over Yatton and flew on a course which led them over Wraxall, Abbots Leigh, across the river at the horseshoe bend to Stoke Bishop, Westbury-on-Trym, Southmead and Filton, which was their main target. There 168 high-explosive bombs were dropped in forty-five seconds. Previous attacks had been made by small formations of a few planes at a time, but this was bombing on the grand scale. The enemy flew in perfect formation and there were no British planes to oppose him. He was quite indifferent to the feeble anti-aircraft fire which was all that the defenders of the city could do to obstruct his path. On his way, he destroyed a number of private houses, killed and wounded some citizens, but Filton received the main weight of the attack. This already badly damaged district was now still further smashed. Oil bombs, high explosives bombs and incendiaries rained indiscriminately on private dwellings, shops and factories. Nine hundred houses in Filton alone were partially or wholly destroyed, in addition to a number of others in Southmead, Westbury-on-Trym and elsewhere. Several months

were to elapse before the damage caused to the factories that morning was made good, but more serious than this was the loss of life. Six shelters full of people were struck, with appalling results. As some of the bombs did not explode for several hours after the raid a number of members of the Bristol medical service were injured while they were at work in the ruins. In all, this raid caused 382 casualties of whom ninety-one were killed outright and nine later died. From the enemy's point of view the morning's work was highly satisfactory and Filton was a legitimate target, but the lighthearted gaiety with which Bristol had endured earlier raids now vanished. The savage hatred of Germany deepened and the demand for vindictive reprisals grew in volume.

Inevitably, this terrible experience led to a good deal of unfavourable criticism. The public was not satisfied with Bristol's defences and the grumbling which had been heard on this subject previously became louder. There had been a conspicuous lack of co-ordination between the fighting services and the civil defence, it was said. The city was almost naked in respect of aerial cover, and so forth and so forth. Once more the garrison commander tried to calm the public disquiet by assurances that the defences had not been weakened, though he did point out again that some of the guns had been moved to better sites. The truth was that Bristol was very weakly defended, which was inevitable in view of the many years of neglect that had preceded the war and the terrible strain which was at that time placed upon the Royal Air Force by the determined attack of the enemy. No British planes had appeared in the skies of Bristol that morning, and few people paused to ask the reason why. So they indulged in much understandable but unreasonable anger. Fortunately, no one in the city then knew the insignificant number of British fighters which still remained to oppose the enemy. If the public had realized how few were the men upon whose prowess the life of the nation at that moment depended, the famous words of the Prime Minister would have acquired a heightened significance, but Bristol did not know this stark truth, and so its people shouted for more guns and more planes to protect them.

On the 27th, the enemy attempted to repeat his exploit of two days before, but he soon learned his mistake. This time

Bristol was ready for him. British fighters scattered the enemy like a flock of sheep and, with the aid of anti-aircraft fire, the assailants were driven off before they could inflict any damage on the city. One Messerschmitt was brought down at Stapleton and others between Bristol and the south coast. As this abortive attack was made before noon on a fine autumn day, Bristolians had a good view of the aerial battle. British planes darted about the sky among the enemy and it was clear that the Luftwaffe was out-mancœuvred and out-fought at every point. This victory did much to restore public confidence, and that confidence was still further strengthened that same day when the Town Clerk announced that a squadron of fighters was henceforward to be based on Filton.

The civil defence forces increased their reputation during these crises. Of all the commendations that they received there was none they valued more than a message from the Prime Minister. In the lull between raids training went on as usual and a special rescue school was set up. The Controller was anxious that the considerable body of experience which had so far been accumulated in Bristol and elsewhere about the nature of civil defence work should be applied as soon as possible.

Throughout the autumn, the clamour for private shelters was intensified, but the country had far more pressing needs for its limited supplies of steel, and when winter closed in, many householders were still shelterless. Instead of regretting their own unwisdom, however, they blamed the Government.

The casualties so far sustained showed that the Medical Officer was right in his demands for larger services and that the Government policy of restriction was wrong. So the medical services were strengthened. Cleansing stations, mortuaries and the Casualty Bureau were kept continually staffed. More mobile canteens were put into service and the work of the W.V.S. in this department was extended. As an example of the importance of first aid training, about which there had been so much scepticism in the pre-war period, the Medical Officer of Health mentioned an instance when a life had been saved by a tourniquet made of a kitchen poker and a handkerchief.

As the end of September Sir Geoffrey Peto, who had been Regional Commissioner since the previous winter, retired. During his period of office he had loyally supported the civic

authorities. He had been most generous in his recognition of the work of the civil defence forces and of their steadiness. Sir Geoffrey and Lady Peto made many friends in Bristol but, while their departure was regretted, Bristol extended a warm welcome to the returning Sir Hugh Elles. He was already well known in the city, as he had been Regional Commissioner during the first few months of the war. He continued to hold the post until February 1945, when peace was already in sight. During that long and trying time he came to be regarded by Bristolians as one of themselves. They found in him a man easy of approach when his counsel and advice were sought. Provided that the subject under discussion had some bearing on the war and that the problem was briefly and clearly stated to him, he was a good listener, but he was merciless towards the mere time-waster. He expected and inspired promptness and efficiency in those under him and, while prepared to give reprimand where it was necessary, he was even readier to give praise when it was deserved. In heavy raids he seemed to know by instinct where the situation was likely to be most critical and his appearance always brought confidence and encouragement. It was his proud boast that he never missed a single Bristol raid. On many occasions when the wardens had been injured, or there were not enough of them, he took a hand in the work himself. In his farewell speech at the Council House on 28 February, 1945, he declared:

When I took office Regional Commissioners were a new invention. We started out with a very broad and indefinite mandate—so British! We were responsible for the co-operation and control of Civil Defence, and in certain circumstances responsible for the government in that part of the country to which we were appointed. What I have tried to do is to boil down these two pompous words co-operation and control to two simple words—team work.

Bristolians had complete confidence in their Regional Commissioner. They respected his energy and his upright soldierly character. His untimely death just after the war had ended was felt as a personal loss by thousands of men and women who had served under him.

In the early autumn when London was under constant

attack thousands of homeless and distressed people poured westward. They crowded into Bristol, which was already overfull, and they were rapidly filling up all the rural areas in the neighbourhood. With the best will in the world to be considerate, Bristol felt that she could not bear this steadily increasing burden, as her own housing problem was already almost insoluble. Moreover, as everyone was certain that worse raids were to come, it might be necessary to find room for Bristol's homeless families in the adjacent countryside. But, in practice, it was impossible to differentiate between claims of distress. The suffering was the same wherever people came from, and to deny relief to strangers outraged Bristol's traditional sense of hospitality. Indeed, as will be shown in Chapter XII, war relief was, in fact, one problem.

Although the wailing of the siren was heard almost every day, save for a raid on the night of the 15th, October was fairly free from attack. Some high explosives and incendiaries fell in the Clifton, Central, Shirehampton and St. George divisions, but the main assault was on a line running through Weston-in-Gordano, Portbury, Horseshoe Bend, Druid Stoke, Henleaze, Westbury-on-Trym and Southmead. Kingswood, Hanham and the area between Lawford's Gate and Colston's Boys' School also suffered. During the remainder of the month and in the early part of November, there was sporadic raiding which chiefly affected the surrounding country, though Avonmouth Docks, Filton and some other vital places were visited at different times. The damage caused, however, was slight.

At this time the city had a moment of relaxation and a reminder of happier days that now seemed so remote. A great rush to the shops occurred, and the whole population suddenly began to buy things of all kinds, but this pleasant interlude was soon ended, for the purchase tax was imposed, goods grew scarcer and the woeful shriek of the sirens went on, while bombs intermittently fell.

From now on Bristol became more and more conscious of the number and generosity of her friends. On 25 October two of the American fleet of mobile first aid units were handed over to the Casualty Service. On the following day, the Lord Mayor, Alderman A. W. S. Burgess, expressed the thanks of the city for the kind messages which he received from Bristol, Connecticut.

"It is a help to us Bristolians," he said, "to feel that in this gigantic struggle against oppression and tyranny we have the kind thoughts and good wishes of our friends across the Atlantic." Early in November, a parcel of woollen comforts was sent to the Lord Mayor from the Bristolians' Society of New South Wales.

At the end of October, Mr. Ernest Bevin, a Bristolian himself, addressed a large meeting in the Colston Hall, composed of civil defence personnel, factory workers, officials and members of the Forces. A few days later, Mr. Morrison inspected the civil defence services, which he declared were up to the London standard, but he begged them not to grow slack as heavy attacks might come at any moment.

As winter approached, responsible officials grew apprehensive about coal supplies. This subject had come up for consideration many times during the previous summer and, if the situation was not satisfactory, it was no fault of the Lord Mayor and his colleagues. Once more, the advocates of deep shelters, who appeared to think that these were a panacea for every ill resulting from war, loudly demanded that they should be constructed. Mr. Morrison, however, was able to deal with this outcry himself. He declared that the Government would not authorize the construction of deep shelters and that the continued reiteration of this foolish demand was a waste of breath. Meanwhile, the Emergency and other committees were concerned with more practical complaints such as the defects of the local transport system and slowness in the repair of bombed houses. This latter complaint was not wholly just, since much of the delay was the direct result of the fact that the necessary materials were not available, and the labour supply was inadequate. A more justifiable source of uneasiness arose from doubts in the minds of householders in respect of mortgages, ground rent, insurance and hire purchase payments on property and furniture which had been destroyed.

As far as the war itself was concerned, the whole nation was greatly reassured by the Battle of Britain, the Royal Air Force attack on Hamburg, and the Royal Navy's achievement at Taranto. For the moment, also, the threat to Egypt had diminished, for since their assault in September, which had carried them as far as Sidi Barrani, the Italians had been inex-



plicably inactive. At home, it was plain that, although he had inflicted grievous damage, much of the enemy's effort had been wasted through inaccurate bombing, and certainly the results so far achieved were meagre in proportion to his determined effort. A surprisingly large number of his bombs failed to explode and the task of removing these turned out to be far more onerous than had been expected.

So November drew to its close, and, as yet, though Bristol had been attacked, its sufferings were slight in comparison with those already inflicted upon London and Coventry. But its *Dies Irae* was at hand.

## VII

### A CITY IN FLAMES

ON 24 November 1940 a new period of the war began for Bristol, and during the next six months she passed through a trying experience. The city was heavily raided three times in a fortnight. Then for almost a month there was a lull, though the siren continually sounded. Large-scale attacks occurred early in January and these in turn were followed by a few weeks of comparative calm interrupted by one or two raids. In March the enemy once more appeared in force and the crescendo of bombing reached its climax on Good Friday, which fell that year on 11 April.

As the bombing of one city is very similar to that of any other, what was true of Coventry, London, Portsmouth, Southampton and Plymouth was true of Bristol. It is therefore not proposed here to deal at length with all of these raids.

The Germans had been well taught about the Englishman's Sunday and they assumed that on that day civil defence vigilance would be somewhat relaxed. So on seven of the nine Sundays in November and December the Luftwaffe attacked the largely depopulated central areas of big cities. On Sunday, 24 November, the people of Bristol attended their churches as usual. It was a quiet, hazy day and there was nothing about it to distinguish it from other days. Shortly after nightfall the sirens sounded. For the next three hours the city was taught the meaning of what was commonly spoken of as the blitz. Only sixty planes, or thereabouts, took part in this raid, which seems slight when compared with the mighty Allied armadas that were later dispatched against Germany, but nevertheless the damage they caused was great. The enemy attacked in small formations of two or three bombers at a time and followed a procedure which later came to be far too familiar. The leading planes dropped enormous flares which descended slowly and lit the path for their successors. Then came a rain of incendiaries

and when the fires were well alight heavy explosive bombs were dropped.

The Luftwaffe concentrated its attention that night on the centre of the city and on Clifton, Bedminster, Knowle and St. George. To the harassed people who fought the fires that were engulfing their city the defence appeared to be feeble. The enemy apparently had the sky to himself and was able to come and go as he chose. Not long after the raid began Clifton Parish Church was set alight and destroyed. On both sides of Queen's Road houses were burning. The Preparatory Department of the Grammar School became a beacon for the bombers that went on to attack the Museum and the University. Soon the former of these was flaming and when morning came the stuffed giraffe, that had enthralled thousands of Bristol children in the past, stood in splendid isolation amid the ruins. Various parts of the University suffered, but the greatest disaster that befell it that night, and indeed during the whole war, was the loss of its Great Hall. This was a superb specimen of modern workmanship. Its hammer-beam roof was one of the finest of its kind to be found in England and its linen-fold oak panelling was beautiful to look upon and pleasant to touch. This hall, which had been used as a library by King's College, contained several thousand volumes that had been brought down from London for the use of the students. By morning the great roof, the exquisite panelling, the rich carving and all the books had disappeared. Only the shell remained and a hideous mass of twisted and blackened girders, ashes and dirty water. Its walls still stood and, though they are over two feet thick, their outer side was hot to the touch several hours after the fire had burnt itself out.

It was necessary to run a gauntlet of fire in order to go down Park Street while in the near distance the Prince's Theatre was alight and houses in Charlotte Street and Great George Street were blazing. Freemason's Hall and shops on College Green were destroyed, but by good fortune the Centre escaped. If that portion of it that covers in the Frome River had been seriously damaged, the transport system would have been thrown into confusion and the life of the city paralysed. St. Nicholas Church, from whose tower the curfew had sounded since the fifteenth and possibly from the eleventh century, was reduced

to ruins; Mary-le-Port Street was totally destroyed; Victoria Street, Bridge Street, High Street, Wine Street, Union Street, Castle Street and Broadmead were all heavily damaged. Among other buildings that disappeared were St. Peter's Hospital, one of the finest remaining Tudor mansions in the country, and the old Dutch House which had been a show place in Bristol since the close of the seventeenth century. Far more serious was the destruction of Temple Church, which had withstood the ravages of 800 years. By morning it too was a ruin, though its famous leaning tower still stood above the wreckage—a monument both to German ruthlessness and to the skill of its medieval builders. In this and succeeding raids a number of other churches perished because they were left locked and unprotected. Since the fire-fighters could not enter them their destruction was certain once the incendiaries had set the place alight. These ancient buildings had never appeared more lovely than when their full beauty was revealed, traced out by flame in the hour of their doom. The Central Control at 55 Broadmead was put out of action but as the reserve centre at the University was flooded with water the Controller and his staff temporarily established themselves in a cellar of the City Engineer's department.

The last enemy plane quitted the scene of destruction shortly after 11 p.m. and the All Clear was given before midnight. So the crump of high explosives was ended, but the crash of falling houses, the hoarse shouts of fire-fighters and the roar of the great conflagration continued. People emerged from their shelters to stretch their limbs, to breathe the acrid air and to behold their city swathed in flames. Before dawn many of the fires were extinguished and weary men were able at last to snatch a few minutes for rest and refreshment. In the relative silence that thus ensued the desolation seemed complete, but it was intensified when at last dawn came. Save for the dull sound of subsiding masonry, the disconsolate drip of water where fire-fighters had been at work, and the moaning of the wind through the blackened and distorted remains of what had so recently been fashionable shops and historic buildings, the place was like a city of the dead. Here and there tongues of flame would suddenly shoot out and as suddenly disappear. Everywhere there was the pervasive, unforgettable smell of a great fire, and a

heavy pall of smoke covered the city as a blanket might be drawn over the face of a corpse. For many people who walked through the almost unrecognizable remains of familiar streets that dismal morning the most vivid recollection will always be of broken glass. Broken glass was everywhere. It lay so thick in the streets that people seemed to be wading through it as they passed along; it covered the floors of houses that still stood; it lay thick on garden paths and flower beds; it festooned walls and gateways and stuck out in jagged points from pools of water. Bristol, however, had no time then to think of these things and even before the raid was over the work of restoration and clearance had begun. So it continued for days to come. Unexploded bombs were searched out and many, though by no means all, were removed by the gallant men who specialized in this dangerous trade.

The enemy attacked again on the evenings of the 25th and 26th, but this time Avonmouth docks were singled out for special treatment. Many bombs fell harmlessly on Shirehampton Golf Links, greatly to the satisfaction of the city but to the chagrin of the Shirehampton Golf Club. For the rest of November, though the sirens often sounded and people were continually scurrying into shelters, there were no more raids, but this breathing space was not destined to be of long duration.

Just after 6 o'clock on the evening of 2 December another raid began which continued for the next five hours. The heaviest blows fell on St. George, the centre of the city, and Clifton. Churches, schools, hospitals, factories, shops and private houses were damaged and demolished; a ship was hit, lying in her berth in Cumberland Basin; Portland Square was gutted, Temple Meads Station was hit again and various suburban lines were put out of action for several hours. This night of horror was succeeded by a short respite, but on the 6th the enemy came again with forty-five planes. The Council House, the Assize Courts, the General Post Office and the Corn Exchange were all damaged, but the most grievous loss that night was the destruction of the Merchants Hall. There for over two centuries the ancient Society of Merchant Venturers had conducted its affairs and entertained its guests. Distinguished visitors from all parts of the world were familiar with those richly furnished Georgian rooms in which the merchants maintained the stately

ceremonial of bygone times and dispensed the princely hospitality of a more gracious age. In this raid, also, hospitals were struck; factories, churches, shops and private houses were burned down or blasted to pieces and once more the docks and Temple Meads Station were attacked.

For many a bereaved family regret for this destruction of the monuments of the past and present was far less poignant than sorrow for the loss of dear ones. Buildings after all were things of wood and stone and others might be erected in their places which would serve the need of the present even though they did not also symbolize the spirit of the past, but parent, child, sister, sweetheart, wife, husband or friend could not be brought back. They had gone and their voices were for ever still.

A great modern city is a complicated machine and if it is to run smoothly, even in normal times, constant supervision is necessary. A prolonged stoppage in one or more of its public services may threaten the whole population with disaster. The Germans were well aware of all of this. They believed that if a number of cities were sufficiently bombed the nation as a whole would clamour for peace and the more the ordinary people were made to suffer the sooner would this clamour begin. In fact, the Germans did in these raids kill and injure many citizens and they made havoc of the public services, but they showed profound ignorance of British psychology.

On 24 November, 207 were killed, 187 injured seriously and 703 slightly, while 1390 people were rendered homeless. About ninety water mains were cut, so it need be no matter for surprise that Bristol burned that night. In the lower parts of the city, water pressure soon fell from 75 pounds to the square inch to 20, but it was back to normal again in two days. Elsewhere, particularly in the Clifton area after the Victoria reservoir had been struck, the water supply failed. As an illustration of the energy with which the work of restoration was pushed forward it must be recorded that by 1 December all but five of the ninety-five fractures had been mended. During the whole period of raiding 399 mains were cut by enemy action and in addition a number of others were damaged by demolition work and crater subsidence; 3842 communication pipes were also cut.

The gas service had a similar experience. On the night of 24 November alone twenty-four mains were cut, five million cubic feet of gas were lost, and thousands of people were deprived of their supplies. In the eighteen days which covered the sharp raids of November and December, though nearly 200 mains were damaged, no important factory was wholly without gas for more than four days.

The electricity services suffered in the same degree. Thus the raid of 24 November deprived the whole city of its power save for Avonmouth and some northern districts. Avonmouth was seriously affected on the following night but by Thursday evening, 26 November, the greater part of the damaged cables of priority consumers were once more "alive" and it was not long before the electricity service was again normal. In a later raid, owing to the lack of electric power, twenty-eight sirens were put out of action and the swing-bridge at Cumberland Basin could not be used. What has been said of water, gas and electricity applies equally to the telephone and other services, but always it was the same story. In spite of appalling destruction they were soon working again.

The amount of thought and the labour required to bring about this satisfactory result can only be known by the officials and workmen concerned. Streets were cleared, dangerous walls were pulled down and wherever possible houses were made fit for habitation. In this enormous task of demolition and clearance the work of the garrison was invaluable and at one time during the raids 700 men were on duty in the city.

Meanwhile the sad task of searching out the bodies of vanished citizens proceeded. It was not only necessary that this work should be done quickly; it was necessary that the public should realize that it was being done, for in that time of stress and danger false rumours again became a serious menace. People had a right to speedy and definite knowledge of the facts. During these early raids the technique of informing the public was still defective and the respective fields of responsibility of civic, regional and central authorities were far from clear, but knowledge and skill came with experience. At first the Ministry of Information undoubtedly erred on the side of being over-cautious in its determination not to give the enemy

any crumb of information that could possibly be of any use to him. Bristol was both irritated and amused when it read in its morning papers that there had been a big raid on a West of England town on the previous night. Bristolians knew and the Germans knew what town it was so why, people asked, should there be this absurd secrecy? It must be confessed, moreover, that with this amusement and irritation there was a slight tinge of jealousy as well. Everyone had been told about the tragedy of Coventry, but Bristol's wounds were also grievous and why, her citizens asked, should her misfortune go unrecorded? Each bombed town considered that the mauling it had received far surpassed that of its peers and what was true of different cities applied equally to individuals within them. Thus there grew up a macabre competition in distress and it became a matter of pride to have suffered from a heavier bomb than one's neighbour. Men who in quieter times had been accustomed to meet in the local of an evening for a game of darts and a pint of mild and bitter now foregathered on the rooftops at midnight to extinguish incendiaries and vie with each other in accounts of the numerous high explosives that had come their way.

In spite of the censorship and controls of various kinds placed upon it, the local Press served the city faithfully through the whole war. Bristol papers not only worked loyally with the authorities and with each other; they showed at all times a sober responsible recognition of their important function. Like the rest of the community, they suffered in the raids and production was often difficult. When the premises of one journal were damaged its competitors readily placed their presses at its disposal. Papers already reduced in size now shrank still further and more than once the *Western Daily Press* was reduced to one page. On one occasion it was printed on a hand press that had not been used for fifty years and once it was printed in Bath. Still, whatever the difficulties, the daily issues came out and the public was comforted, for so long as it received its papers, however shrunken, things could not be as bad as they seemed.

In addition to the Press, information was disseminated by leaflets issued by the civic authority; it was passed on through the Wardens' Service to private citizens; it was spread by the ubiquitous and tireless W.V.S., as well as by the local officials



of the Ministry of Information. To begin with this latter body was ill-equipped for this particular work, but as the winter advanced its resources and technique improved. In the period after each of the later raids it had at its disposal five or six loudspeaker vans, manned by voluntary drivers and broadcasters. The Ministry was also able to make some use of its group leaders.

The enemy was delighted with his work, the effect of which he tended to exaggerate. After the raid on 24 November a German paper announced:

The harbour and industrial plant of Bristol was attacked . . . In an uninterrupted line the German bombers flew over this target and dropped bombs of such heavy weight that whole blocks of houses collapsed as could be observed by the crews in the bright light of numerous fires. Long rows of warehouses were in flames, many gas tanks exploded. The crews of returning planes say that the attack was surprisingly great.

According to the enemy the whole harbour area was demolished and one of Great Britain's chief oil and food intake ports had been eliminated. To prove that these gratifying assertions were true, photographs were published in German papers. "As a distributing centre and important railway junction Bristol has been wiped out," and indeed for some time after that this city was referred to in the past tense. The destruction was very great, it is true, but as the German airmen looked down on the flaming city they might well, like Scipio when he beheld vanquished Carthage in flames, have recalled the prophetic lines of Homer:

A day will come when sacred Troy shall perish  
And Priam and Priam's people shall be slain.

The British people were resolved that the enemy would pay in full measure for his wanton devilry. Before the end of the war German cities had learned to regret the day they had hurled their Air Force against the cities of Great Britain, for the resolution taken by the people of this country in the time of their anguish was carried into terrible effect.

Within the first hour of the attack on the 24th, seventy major fires were reported. It was estimated that between five and ten

appliances were needed to fight each of the large fires, but the Chief Constable had at his disposal a mere 224 in all. Later that night over 200 fires were burning at the same time, of which ten were classified as major, fifteen as serious, sixty-four as medium and 121 as small. To deal with this situation the Chief Fire Brigade Officer had at his command fewer than 1100 whole-time firemen, which was ten per cent under wartime strength, and more than 1000 part-time firemen. Here it may be well to recall that two years previously the Chief Constable had asked for very much larger numbers of men in both groups. Very soon, therefore, all the available appliances were in use and there were many fires that the Brigade could not touch. As the night wore on and other great fires were reported the officers were confronted with the unpleasant alternatives of withdrawing some of their strength from fires which they were beginning to get under control or of allowing the new ones to burn at will. Inevitably the sight of a home or factory or shop, that represented the effort of a lifetime, burning unhindered gave rise to much anger. When later it was rumoured that there were numbers of large pumps in the city lying idle that night this anger became even more fierce. The fact is that these pumps, which had been sent to Bristol as a safe place in which to be stored, were incomplete and could not have been used even if there had been the trained men to work them. Again, although emergency water tanks had been placed at convenient spots throughout the city and although two rivers ran through it, it has already been seen that the water supply was too weak to be of any service shortly after the raid began on the 24th. Even when water was available it frequently could not be brought to the fires as there was not enough hose-pipe. Though neighbouring towns did their utmost to assist, the damage was done before the reinforcements could arrive.

A catastrophe that caused such a grievous loss of property naturally gave rise to much criticism. When, however, it is remembered that the Brigade was confronted with a wholly unprecedented situation the unreasonableness of such adverse comment becomes clear. No one beforehand had any conception of the conflagration which would result from a heavy assault. When all of this is taken into consideration, the conclusion must be that, though the Brigade was weaker than it should

have been and was woefully lacking in equipment, notably hose-pipe, the fireman's lifeline, it acquitted itself with honour. In succeeding weeks discipline was tightened up, the training of fire-watchers was intensified and during this winter all able-bodied citizens not otherwise engaged in the fighting or the civil defence forces were compelled to share in this work.

In the bleak days that followed the raids of late November and early December, as Bristol buried her dead in mass graves, her reflections were not cheerful. Baseless rumours about alleged reductions in the city's garrison once more circulated, together with dozens of other false stories, calculated to depress the public spirit.

From all sides messages of sympathy and offers of help poured in. It is impossible here to do more than state that these innumerable tokens of goodwill caused a great uplifting of hearts in Bristol. The Lord Mayor, Alderman T. H. J. Underdown, congratulated his fellow citizens on their gallantry; the Regional Commissioner in soldierly fashion expressed his satisfaction and admiration at the behaviour of the city. Early in December Queen Mary, accompanied by the Princess Royal and the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Lieutenant of the County of Bristol, viewed the destruction and expressed her sympathy to the bereaved. On the 16th Bristol was honoured by a visit from the King himself and, although his coming was unheralded, the half-ruined city gave him a warm welcome. Flags fluttered from boarded-up windows and the shattered walls of destroyed houses, cheering crowds received him wherever he went and bomb craters were decorated with messages expressing enthusiastic loyalty to the King and defiance of the enemy. Bristol was also encouraged by a letter from the Prime Minister to the Lord Mayor:

My Lord Mayor,

My thoughts have been much with the inhabitants of Bristol in the ordeal of these last weeks. As Chancellor of the University, I feel myself united to them by a special bond of sympathy, and I have heard with pride of the courage, resolution and patience with which they have answered these detestable attacks on their families and their homes.

It is the spirit such as theirs which makes certain the victory of our cause.

While the clearance of streets went on, while the sirens continued to shriek and the city slowly put herself to rights, Christmas drew near. Even at this depressing time Bristol did not forget her ancient tradition of hospitality. The local Press besought its readers to invite Dominion soldiers to their homes on Christmas Day, and Bristol responded as she always does to such appeals. The match between the New Zealand Expeditionary Force Rugby team and a West of England side at the Memorial Ground was a reminder of happier times, for even in her distress Bristol still loved a good game. Meanwhile the war in Africa was turning in the Empire's favour. By 15 December the enemy had been expelled from Egypt, the best part of five of his divisions had been destroyed and 38,000 prisoners had been captured. What was left of the Italian army of Cyrenaica therefore withdrew into the now isolated defences of Bardia.

So the gloom was somewhat mitigated. In spite of the scars of war and the gaps in many a family circle, it was agreed by all that as far as possible the festival should be kept as usual. For two days the enemy left Bristol alone and this period of relaxation acquired additional value from being short. The wailing of sirens began once more on the 27th and so continued. The old year died unregretted though immortalized by the glory of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the gallantry of the British cities.

## VIII

### A GRIM WINTER

BRISTOL looked forward to the New Year, 1941, undaunted by the wounds she had received but with little hope of happiness in store. January came in cold and stormy, which made the condition of those who lived in patched-up houses unbelievably wretched. Two of the worst winter months still lay ahead and everyone was convinced that heavy attacks would soon be renewed. This proved to be true, for on 3 January the enemy appeared in strength once more. Shortly after six in the evening, which was his usual time of arrival, the flares began to descend. This attack continued with some intermission for twelve hours. Temple Meads Station was set ablaze. Buildings in Bridge Street and High Street which had so far escaped were destroyed. Houses in Queen Square, the Welsh Back, Broad Quay and Nelson Street were demolished. St. Augustine's Church, one of the oldest in the city, was burnt out, as was the Guildhall. This raid was not only the longest so far, it was also memorable on account of "Satan," which was the name given to the largest bomb that fell on the city during the war. Happily it did not explode. It weighed 4000 pounds and without its tail it was 8 feet 11 inches in length and 2 feet 2 inches in diameter. By now the loss of life was considerable. Up to and including the raids of 3 January, 605 people were killed, 564 seriously and 1137 slightly injured.

The longest, though by no means the most destructive, raid occurred on the night of 4 January. This lasted for twelve and three quarter hours. Again the weight of the assault fell on Avonmouth where, though some damage was caused, work was not seriously interrupted. Portishead, Portbury, Ham Green, Yatton, Nailsea, Clapton-in-Gordano, were also hit and numbers of bombs fell harmlessly along the Bristol Channel coast.

After that, with the sirens still sounding, there ensued a few days of immunity but a small raid occurred on the 9th. On this

occasion Shirehampton, Clifton and Hotwells suffered slightly, factories were damaged in the city, and at Avonmouth oil installations were set alight. Across the river, Pill and Portbury were attacked. Then came another lull but on 16 January the city had two raids, with Avonmouth once more the chief target. It was during these January raids that the effect of stricter discipline and better training, together with applied experience, showed themselves. Thus on the night of 4 January "the keen and rapid work done by wardens, firewatchers and services . . . was especially remarked." On that night all the larger fires were put out by ten o'clock. By now the whole city was fighting back. Incendiaries barely struck the ground before they were extinguished and, with greater knowledge of German methods and weapons, confidence increased. In spite of all that could be done, however, some fires got out of control and guided later attackers to their goal.

The severe cold of the first half of January increased the difficulties of fire-fighters, rescue parties and repair gangs. It immobilized the turntable ladders, and blow lamps had to be used before they could be set in motion again. Great icicles that hung from roofs and ladders obstructed the fire-fighters and were a menace to those who passed below. The clothing froze on the firemen's bodies so that they were encased in ice and movement of any kind became difficult. If the water pressure failed for a moment, and it often failed at this time, the hose-pipes were turned into solid tubes. Pumps were continually frozen and the roads were sheets of ice. The movement of vehicles was slowed up or stopped altogether when speed was essential. For many hours after raids men and women were pinned down under the rubble of demolished buildings, often in great physical pain with streams of icy water pouring over them.

The milder, though still harsh, winter weather of late January and February was not wholly disadvantageous to Bristol for it hampered the enemy as well. With the whole country blanketed in fog and low cloud, attacks were very much more difficult and, indeed, the Luftwaffe was temporarily out of action. Thus Bristol was provided with a much needed period for rest and recuperation. The aerodromes which the Germans were now using in occupied territory were for the most part situated in

low-lying country and the Luftwaffe, like the R.A.F., was forced to struggle with floods, ice, snow, and mud. Even when they could get their planes into the air, as techniques which were later developed were still unknown to them, targets were difficult, if not impossible, to find; when they managed to return to base, landings were dangerous and might be exceedingly costly in men and machines. The R.A.F. was able to use this time in refitting and reorganizing but this was more difficult for the Germans. The Luftwaffe had to be maintained on alien airfields far from its base of supplies in the fatherland, from which, thanks to the work of the R.A.F., it was separated by damaged railways and disorganized marshalling yards.

At the beginning of 1941 the possibility of invasion was still a source of anxiety. As it was believed that the enemy might use gas, respirators were inspected and people were again instructed to carry them wherever they went. These exhortations, however, were largely unheeded, for by that time the nation as a whole had come to believe that this dread weapon would never be employed.

Bristol was not too occupied with its own affairs to spare a thought for the war beyond its gates, and at first fortune seemed to favour the Allies. The efforts of the past strenuous months were now bearing fruit. War equipment of all kinds was pouring out from the factories, supplies were streaming in through the ports and now that it had weapons again the army was full of fight. A British force had taken the offensive in North Africa, the stage was set for still other momentous moves in the game of war elsewhere. Bardia was captured on 5 January and the British army swept forward into Libya. On the 22nd Tobruk capitulated and in six weeks 113,000 prisoners and over 700 enemy guns passed into British hands. With the capture of this port a new and valuable base was provided which facilitated the westward advance of the victorious British army. In March, British Somaliland was regained, Keren was captured on the 27th, and powerful British Commonwealth forces from Eritrea, the Sudan and Kenya entered Ethiopia.

These stirring events brought much satisfaction to the people of Bristol, but unfortunately the news from the Balkans was of a very different nature. During this winter it became clear to Great Britain that Yugoslavia and Greece were certain to be

attacked. In March, therefore, the army of the Nile, and later strong Commonwealth forces, with munitions that could ill be spared, were despatched to Greece. Bulgaria, true to her treacherous tradition, threw in her lot with Germany and for some time it seemed that Yugoslavia was likely to follow her example. Early in April the young King Peter threw over his German advisers, but this gallant action brought a swift and terrible retort. The Luftwaffe flew south and Belgrade suffered the fate of Rotterdam. The Germans invaded Greece on 6 April, joined hands with the Italians, and attacked the Commonwealth forces. There followed the short but disastrous Greek campaign in which superior numbers, weapons and well-prepared plans triumphed over courage and lack of resources. The Allies were forced to retire, though they took full advantage of every defensible position, but at last the Germans were in Athens and by 24 April Greece was overrun.

On 31 March a new enemy offensive in North Africa began but this time it was German not Italian. Unfortunately Hitler was able to put better weapons into the field and larger forces than his opponents possessed, weakened as the latter were by the drain of the Greek campaign. So now the position was reversed; the British were thrown back and by May they were once more on the Egyptian frontier, though Tobruk was firmly held, a sally port, as Mr. Churchill called it, that might be of inestimable value in the time to come.

Meanwhile the grim struggle on the Atlantic continued with England's life as the prize. Day by day and week by week the losses of allied ships mounted but in spite of all that the enemy could do precious cargoes were brought safely into port. The Empire stood loyally by the Mother Country. In every theatre of war Dominion, Colonial or Indian troops co-operated with the United Kingdom forces and rendered invaluable aid. Seldom in history has there been such a spectacular demonstration of unity. Any of the distant dependencies of the Crown could have quitted the Empire if they had so wished. Day and night they were informed by the German radio that England was crushed and that the Empire was destroyed, but they remained staunch.

Their young men volunteered for service and the Commonwealth poured millions of pounds worth of gifts into the Mother



Country. Across the Atlantic American anger at German brutality was growing and sympathy for Britain was increasing. Future generations of Britons should never be allowed to forget what their country owed to the generous peoples of the Colonies, India, the Dominions and the United States at this time. The presents that were received were not unwanted superfluities; their quality was of the best; they had all been chosen intelligently to meet the needs of people who had suddenly been deprived of food, household gear, and other necessities of civilized life.

At Christmas the Lord Mayor sent greetings to the Mayors of each of the twenty Bristols in the United States. His card bore a picture of the Drawbridge, not far from which, almost 450 years before, John Cabot in the *Matthew* had sailed on his historic voyage. The Lord Mayor never wearied of reminding American friends that men from the old city on the Avon were the first Britons ever to set foot in the New World. He might also have told them that Bristol sometimes considered herself to be the birthplace of America. Of all the messages which came from Bristols overseas perhaps the most impressive was a radio programme from Bristol, Vermont:

We sympathize with you in your hour of need to meet the power of the Nazis in its hideous forms. We support you in your stand for freedom for nations to shape their destinies.

These words were heard in Bristol to the accompaniment of exploding bombs and the crash of collapsing buildings. By March the Lord Mayor had already received large sums for his Distress Fund, from Canada, the United States and South America.

On 16 April, standing amid the ruins of Mary-le-Port Street, Mr. Bertram de N. Cruger, representing the British War Relief Society of the United States, presented the Lord Mayor with a cheque for £6250. No more appropriate person than Mr. Cruger could be found for such a ceremony since one of his ancestors was Mayor and Sheriff of Bristol and Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers. From 1774 to 1780 he sat for the city in the House of Commons, with Edmund Burke, and again from 1784 to 1790. Traditionally he has been accorded far less respect than he merited, for his reputation has been

## BUT SOME GOT THROUGH



Royal Observer Corps posts and control room were alert night and day, but by the winter of 1940 enemy bombs were being dropped on Bristol. This scene was eloquent . . . a Union Jack still flying.

## THE HEART OF BRISTOL



Bridge Street after the blitz; and the A.F.S. fighting the great fires which destroyed Bristol's traditional shopping centre. Woolworth's store in Broadmead now occupies this site.

belittled in order to enhance that of Burke. In his time Cruger was an outstanding citizen, a staunch defender of the American cause but at the same time a warm friend of the British-American connection. In Parliament his eloquent advocacy won generous praise from his hearers and there appears to be no historic basis for the tradition that he was a mere echo of his mighty fellow member. The fact is that he spoke first at the close of the poll in 1774 and therefore could not have been guilty of the banality: "I say ditto to Mr. Burke," from whom on many occasions he differed very strongly.

Among the many difficult problems that confronted the city in the early months of 1941, the distribution of food was one of the most perplexing. Industrial firms had greatly expanded their canteen facilities, but these could not meet the whole need. So, after prolonged discussion, it was decided to establish British Restaurants in Bristol. Regularly after each raid thousands of meals were provided in the reception hostels. Ministry of Information loudspeaker vans patrolled bombed areas announcing where food, shelter, household necessities and temporary building repair materials could be obtained. As a whole, however, the people did not take kindly to communal meals. They went to the centres when there was no alternative but they preferred to eat their dinners in the privacy of their own homes though shattered and uncomfortable. If they did not like the food provided for them or the manner in which it was distributed they had no hesitation in expressing their opinions in plain, distinct, though by no means always refined, English.

"What's for dinner to-day, Miss?" shouted one woman in Knowle West to a lady announcer on a loudspeaker van.

"Stew," was the reply, "good, hot stew."

"Stew," the woman exclaimed contemptuously, "Han you got summit else, we've 'ad stew for three days—Me old man don't like that much 'e don't. 'E do like summit fried, a bita fish and chips at home now! But stew!"

So she rejected the wholesome food and set off in search of something that would please her old man.

Almost as serious as the problem of food, but far more intractable, was the question of coal. In spite of all that Bristol's officials had done in the preceding summer to avoid it, coal was in short supply during this winter. The authorities did their

utmost to reduce the sufferings of the people who had already endured more than their share. The shortage of coal was due to the enormously increased demands of industry, to the failures of an overworked and somewhat disorganized transport system, as well as to defects in local distribution. As the latter cause could to some extent be corrected some relief was obtained for particularly distressed areas, such as Knowle West, but the coal supply remained inadequate.

Though the heavy raids stimulated recruitment to the civil defence forces there was still a scarcity of men. New recruits merely occupied places vacated by those who had been called up for duty in one or other of the fighting services, and industry was far from satisfied. After raids the local supply of labour became so scarce that it was necessary to borrow men from Bath, Weston-super-Mare and other neighbouring towns. It was fortunate indeed that the enemy did not attack all these places as well as Bristol simultaneously.

Raiding was resumed at the end of February, and it soon became plain that the enemy had adopted a new technique. Now, instead of concentrating his force on one or, perhaps, two towns at a time, followed shortly after by a repetition, he attacked numbers of British cities on the same night. By a display of his apparently inexhaustible resources he hoped the more quickly to cow the English. It is also probable that this new method of attack was adopted because of the enormously increased anti-aircraft fire directed at his planes as well as the growing strength and skill of the R.A.F. During March and April Goering did his utmost to break the spirit of Bristol. The area was bombed twelve times and eight of these attacks were directed mainly against Avonmouth. Although some damage was caused in these raids, no serious interference with the work of the port occurred except on Good Friday. Then the unloading of vessels was held up for a few days, while the debris was cleared away, and in the city docks traffic was impeded for some time by the wreckage of St. Philip's Bridge.

The Germans no longer made any pretence of precision bombing. Indeed, if the propriety of aerial attack was admitted, it was impossible to avoid indiscriminate destruction and it was nonsense to cry out about the respect due to the civilian population when war work of some kind was proceeding in almost

every street. There was a slight attack on 26 February. Just over a week later a stick of bombs, intended for the Bristol Aeroplane Company, caused some destruction in the Southmead housing estate about a mile-and-a-half away. At this time isolated enemy planes developed the unpleasant habit of suddenly swooping out of the clouds and spattering crowded city streets with machine-gun bullets.

At last, after a prelude which continued for almost three weeks, the full orchestra struck up again on 16 March. The enemy followed the railway line from Temple Meads to Lawrence Hill, Stapleton Road, Montpelier and Redland. He attacked Avonmouth, Clifton, the centre of the city and St. George. Between 700 and 800 high-explosive bombs were dropped on the civil defence area. The importance of extinguishing incendiaries as soon as they fell was illustrated by the setting alight of a solitary cottage in Shirehampton, for on the following morning seventy-eight craters were found in its vicinity. Over 100 gas mains were hit, a gasometer was struck and for some time thereafter the supply of gas was deficient in various parts of the city. A large number of electric transmission cables and water mains were cut; two telephone exchanges were isolated. Churches, warehouses and factories were hit; the General Hospital was set alight and railway lines were put out of service. Scarcely a parish of the city escaped in this raid; 6000 houses were damaged in addition to those destroyed and the Controller announced that 2000 men would be required for repair and clearance work for an indefinite time. Fine old Regency buildings collapsed like houses of cards. In some places it was only the front of the house which was cut clean away so that the passer-by could look into its interior as into a doll's house. The pictures were still on the walls and, save for the want of a front, everything seemed horribly normal even to the work-basket on the table and children's toys on the hearth-rug where their owners had left them. This exposure of a family's "household gods" to the gaze of the stranger was a poignant reminder of the hatefulness of war and he was cold indeed who could look on such scenes unmoved. This was the most disastrous raid of the war so far as the loss of life was concerned. Two shelters crammed with people received direct hits. Fifteen were killed in one and twenty-five in the other

and many were injured. Altogether 257 men, women and children lost their lives and 391 were injured.

Raids occurred on 29 March and on 3 and 4 April. By now, however, the anti-aircraft batteries were much stronger than on 24 November and the roar which greeted the enemy gave satisfaction to the citizens. Enemy flares, bursting shells, the beams of searchlights crisscrossing and stabbing the dark night sky provided thousands of spectators with a terrible pyrotechnic display. At the risk of their lives and oblivious of the orders of the wardens that they should take shelter they remained in the streets to watch. Decoy fires blazed in the country and many a German plane was led to drop its deadly load on unoccupied, open moorland.

The last major raids made upon Bristol occurred on Good Friday, 11 April. There were two raids that night, the second of which was by far the more serious. The Cheltenham Road Library was set on fire, Colston's Girls' School was hit, Horfield, the centre of the city, the docks area, College Green, Queen's Road and Clifton were all assaulted. The old Coliseum in Park Row which in its time had played many parts—variety hall, skating rink, Red Cross store house—was burned down. For some time it appeared that the University Library which adjoined it would share its fate. Taylor's-on-the-Green (a place dear to thousands of Bristol women), a gasholder and St. Paul's Church, Bedminster, were destroyed.

About one hundred German planes took part in the Good Friday raids which had a greater psychological effect upon the city than any since 24 November. That night the Prime Minister, who was to visit Bristol the following day, slept in a train on the outskirts and shortly after dawn was inspecting the latest scenes of devastation. The grim mood in which he examined the damage was matched by that of the people of Bristol, for the savage attack of that night appeared to be all the more wanton because of the day upon which it was committed. After his inspection the Prime Minister went on to the University to confer a number of honorary degrees. Mr. J. G. Winant, the American Ambassador, Mr. R. G. Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, and Dr. J. B. Conant, President of Harvard, who received his degree *in absentia*, were the distinguished graduates. Seldom in the history of universities has a ceremony taken

place amid surroundings so unusual. The city was still smouldering, and the crash of walls, where the repair gangs were at work, could be heard as the academic procession formed. Hose-pipes and other evidences of the night's work lay in its path and pools of water were everywhere on the floors. The room in which the Prime Minister took sherry with the University Senate and Council, before the conferment of degrees began, had been just a few hours before the scene of strenuous fire-fighting for it adjoined the blazing Coliseum.

Sir Hugh Elles, fresh from wielding the hose, was there, as was the Lord Mayor with his Sword Bearer, the Sheriff and other civic dignitaries all weary from a night of toil, but still the ceremony went on. Marshal, Mace, Chancellor, Train-Bearer, Pro-Chancellor, Bedells, Honorary Graduands, Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Deans of Faculties, Council, Senate, staff and undergraduates—all were in their proper places.

The speeches delivered were short but eloquent and the Prime Minister when he got up to speak was obviously deeply moved:

Here we gather in academic robes and go through ceremonies and repeat formulas—here in battered Bristol, with the scars of new attacks upon it. Many of those here to-day have been all night at their posts and all have been under the fire of the enemy, under heavy and protracted bombardment. That you should gather in this way is a mark of fortitude and phlegm, of a courage and detachment from material affairs worthy of all that we have learned to believe of ancient Rome or of modern Greece.

I go about the country whenever I can escape for a few hours or for a day from my duty at headquarters, and I see the damage done by the enemy attacks; but I also see side by side with the devastation and amid the ruins quiet, confident, bright and smiling eyes, beaming with a consciousness of being associated with a cause far higher and wider than any human or personal issue. I see the spirit of an unconquerable people. I see a spirit bred in freedom, nursed in tradition which has come down to us through the centuries, and which will surely at this moment, this turning point in the history of the world, enable us to bear our part in such a way that none of our race who come after us will have any reason to cast reproach upon their sires.



As long as daylight lasted that Saturday and on Easter Sunday rescue parties continued to dig for the bodies of vanished citizens while silent crowds at a respectful distance looked on. Save for the clink of picks upon stone and the dull thud of shovelled earth which sounded so much like the filling of a grave, there was no sound but an occasional order to the people to stand back. All spoke in hushed voices for they were in the presence of the dead. These crowds were not mere gatherings of vulgar sightseers, for beneath the heaps of rubble lay all that was left to many of them of parent, husband, wife, child or friend. Nevertheless, on that desecrated Easter Day spring had come again and the worst of the war for Bristol was over.

## IX

### SHELTERS AND SHELTER LIFE

SHELTERS have already been referred to in these pages and in this chapter, which is concerned solely with that subject, some repetition is unavoidable.

The Spanish Civil War taught Bristolians something about the nature of aerial bombardment. They heard eye-witness accounts of its effect upon the civilian population and of various devices adopted by the Spaniards to protect themselves. Before General Franco had triumphed over his enemies it had become clear that Great Britain also might shortly be plunged in war. While there was much discussion and speculation about shelters, it has already been shown that little was done when the Munich crisis occurred in 1938 and that so long as there was any hope of peace the will to prepare for war was paralysed.

During the spring and summer of 1939 there was much talk about the size and destructive power of German high-explosive bombs, about the danger of incendiaries and horrible possibilities of gas, but there was little knowledge. This ignorance helped to slow down shelter construction, but as the outbreak of war drew nearer, the work went forward, though slowly. While the majority of citizens used their cellars, or a strengthened room, or were content with a couple of chairs or a mattress under the stairway, a few of the richer and more resourceful ones had deep dug-outs constructed in their gardens, which they furnished with bunks, oil-stoves, candles, emergency rations, tables and chairs. In some of them there were carpets on the floors, books and periodicals, and even a picture or two on the walls. At least one prosperous Bristol citizen found that in such a place life could be made quite comfortable even though the city burned. Many did nothing at home but depended for their security on nearby public shelters while not a few dismissed the whole subject with a shrug of the shoulders

and the fatalistic reflection that if a bomb was marked for them it would reach them whatever they did. So why worry, they said, as they got on with their work and trusted to luck.

For several months after the outbreak of war Anderson shelters were in short supply, and there was little demand even for those that were available. Then in the second half of 1940, when their worth was appreciated, the Government had more pressing needs for its limited supplies of steel. Before the winter of 1940-41 was over it became clear that the defects of the Andersons were as conspicuous as their merits, so the Morrison shelter was invented. The Anderson resembled a large, steel hen-coop, while the Morrison was more like an open-work hutch designed for a particularly savage variety of rabbit. As this contraption was flat on top it could also be used as a table. The former was generally set up in the garden or in some nearby open space and was frequently half buried in earth. These shelters, in fact, were not only uncomfortable but provided ideal conditions for the advance of respiratory diseases. The Morrison, on the other hand, remained in a ground-floor room, or basement, or cellar and thus enabled its owners to take cover in comparative comfort which was one of the reasons why it so rapidly became popular.

Besides these private domestic shelters, there were various other kinds—public, communal and reserved. There were public surface shelters, public trench shelters, public cellar shelters, school surface shelters, school basement shelters, school trench shelters, school steel shelters, communal surface shelters, communal trench shelters, communal cellar shelters, reserved shelters and hostel shelters. The brick street shelters erected at the beginning of the war in accordance with the specifications of the Ministry of Home Security were insufficiently supplied with cement and thus failed to resist the ravages of the weather, for it was frost, not bombs, that broke them down. When this occurred and many of them had to be demolished, a great popular outcry arose and there was much fiery, though somewhat ill-informed, criticism in the City Council. Later, when more cement and steel were procured the new street shelters withstood bad weather and provided excellent protection against blast and shrapnel. During the whole course of the war the construction of these places of refuge cost the city

£1½ million, and it was reported in September 1945 that their demolition would be an expensive task.

At first the public showed a marked preference for trench shelters but later experience brought the surface shelters into greater favour. It was found that trenches were affected by earth movements caused by falling bombs even at some distance. Moreover they were almost always damp and, as the attack upon Filton in September 1940 showed, they were no more proof against a direct hit by a high explosive than ordinary street shelters.

The basements of public buildings, church crypts, tunnels and even caves were also used, and it was these communal and public shelters which provided the authorities with a number of special problems. As more and more people resorted to such places each night it became evident that the rather haphazard voluntary staffing arrangements which had sufficed at first could no longer meet the need. During the winter of 1940-41, therefore, there came into existence the Shelter Marshals' Service, which in its general organization resembled that of the wardens. There was a chief marshal and under him divisional marshals and group marshals, under whom came full-time and part-time shelter marshals, each of whom was responsible for about 500 people. Altogether this service had some 3000 units in its care and at most there were never more than fifty full-time and under 800 part-time shelter marshals. As it was intended to keep this service distinct from that of the wardens, Bristol preferred the term "marshal" but the Ministry of Home Security did not agree with this view and the term "warden" became general.

The whole service was attached to the City Engineer's department and placed under the general direction of the A.R.P. Shelter Management Committee. This latter body drew up a shelter code, a copy of which was hung up in each shelter, while the marshals were given clear instructions as to their duties. Medical first aid posts were set up on some of the larger ones and before the winter was over two doctors in each division of the city were on call in case of accident or illness, while a team of nurses made regular visits. Canteens were established in various church crypts and other places. While the A.R.P. Shelter Management Committee was responsible for day-to-day

administration, the Ministry of Home Security, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Food, and the Home Office all participated in the determination of shelter policy through the Regional Commissioner. As it was the official view that safety could best be secured by the dispersal of the population, the herding together of large numbers of people was discouraged and domestic shelters were officially preferred to larger ones.

Despite all that the clergy, shelter marshals and police could do, however, thousands of people, during the winter of 1940-41, continued to resort to tunnels, caves, crypts and basements. Within a few weeks of the beginning of heavy bombing in November there was a demand for the provision of entertainments and concerts for the shelter population. In response to this, various bodies did their utmost to reduce the boredom of these unfortunate people. Soon the shelter concerts and other entertainments became so popular that people went there in the evenings to pass a few pleasant hours before returning to their homes. This, however, was quite contrary to the intention of the authorities. The shelter was designed to be an emergency refuge whose protection was to be sought only at a time of utmost need. Therefore the provision of entertainments was discouraged and when allowed they were to be strictly limited in number and never advertised. In order to stress the fact that shelters were not to be regarded as make-shift substitutes for the public house, the cinema, or the concert hall, marshals were instructed to see that all social activities were closed down at 9 p.m. and that people were given ample opportunity to sleep. Those who had come to shelters for rest were not to be disturbed by the thoughtless chatter of gossiping neighbours and the raucous choruses of bacchanalian revellers. The result was that many were able to resume their normal work in the morning refreshed and strengthened by a night's repose. Alcoholic drink of any sort was prohibited in shelters but many a bottle illicitly found its way in, as marshals frequently discovered when it was too late.

The marshal, in fact, was expected to discharge a wide variety of duties. He not only had to see to the cleansing of his shelter, he was required to keep discipline among the people and to disperse them from the entrance where they were invariably prone to congregate. He had to be on his guard against

pilfering, to put down rowdyism, to notify the authorities about the presence of undesirable or verminous people, and to call in medical aid in cases of emergency. It was his duty to combat defeatist talk and generally to discourage mischievous people from deepening the sense of gloom. All these things the shelter marshals did, on the whole, with success. Although there were some unsatisfactory members of the force, whose dismissal became necessary, these men and women performed a notable and valuable piece of social service.

Some of the large shelters were excellently run and in every respect satisfactory. They were well ventilated, suitably provided with sanitation, warm, well-lighted and comfortable. Among these the large communal shelter in the basement of the University Physics Laboratory was one of the best. The building itself was new and strongly constructed, the shelter was spacious and never seriously over-crowded. There were many others in churches, chapels and halls scattered throughout the city, but unfortunately it was not possible for all shelters to reach this high level and they ranged downwards in discomfort and unsuitability to the Portway Tunnel at the bottom of the Avon Gorge, near the Suspension Bridge. This place, as Lord Horder said, "deserved full marks for having everything that a shelter should not possess."

No matter how unsuitable it was, the people had a pathetic faith in it, mainly, it would appear, because it was underground and apparently deep. They refused to believe that it was unsafe and that if a high-explosive bomb were to fall upon the ground above its roof it would cave in and that all inside would be buried alive in a grave from which rescue would be impossible. The more its defects were emphasized by officials, the more certain the deluded people became that the Portway was the only truly safe shelter in the city. Overworked doctors gave certificates to the more importunate stating that it was necessary for them to be admitted to this particular place, and there is no doubt that the good nature of medical men was greatly abused. At length it became necessary for the authorities to beg the medical profession not to persist in this practice.

Towards the close of the short winter day, therefore, hundreds of people would set out from their homes for this miserable Mecca. They came not only from surrounding districts but

from Knowle, Southville, Bedminster, Stoke Bishop and the most distant parts of the city. They came in cars, they came in buses and in lorries, but the greater number of them came on foot. Mothers with strings of toddling children behind them pushed their perambulators for miles through the war-scarred, dreary streets to this haven of which they had heard so much and which, when they first beheld it, must often have caused them the most profound disappointment. After their long trek, they arrived at the tunnel tired and dejected. In their hurry to escape the raid which they believed to be imminent, many of them did not pause to collect food, clothing and other necessities, and so were quite unprepared to face the rigours of a winter night.

This place was part of a disused railway tunnel which the authorities decided could be transformed into a shelter. It was never considered, however, that it was wholly satisfactory and, indeed, the greater part of the tunnel was condemned. The shelter portion was strengthened and provided with certain rudimentary amenities, but beyond the portion so reinforced it was believed that the tunnel was unsuitable. At most the Portway shelter was designed to accommodate about 200 people, and the space was barely adequate even for that small number. Soon, however, it became so popular that it was overcrowded and people were forced to seek for space in the Stygian darkness of the unsafe tunnel beyond. There, without light of any kind save for an occasional oil-lamp, on the damp earthen floor strewn with bits of rock, these cold, hungry and frightened people established their habitations. Water dripped from the roof, trickled down the walls and in rainy weather it became a flood. Instead of 200 people, 2500 to 3000 were herded into this noisome place.

The more resourceful brought bedding with them, sometimes a camp-bed, an oil-stove, chairs and tables. Where possible, each family staked out its claim to a particular bit of floor space, but, as exact boundaries were impossible to establish, squabbling between neighbours was both incessant and shrill. Sometimes a family unit was enclosed by walls made of strips of canvas, and a few people managed to bring tents with them. More often, however, family merged into family without any dividing line, and men, women and children lay in indescribable

squalor on the foul floor. Although canvas wall or tent might provide some semblance of privacy, no protection was possible against noise, dirt and loathsome smells. If serious infection had started in the Portway Tunnel, Bristol might have been confronted with another major catastrophe.

When it was decided that this shelter must be cleared, trouble at once arose. People were unshakable in their belief in the security which it provided, while the Medical Officer of Health was equally certain that unless its misuse was stopped forthwith the outbreak of a serious epidemic might be expected. The City Engineer was equally convinced that the inner tunnel was unsafe. In due course reason prevailed and the rescue service, backed up by the police, carried out the distasteful task of clearing and cleansing the place. When this was completed, a new shelter was built in the tunnel whose roof and walls were strengthened. The result of these improvements was that Portway was made capable of accommodating 400 people. Henceforward only those who possessed tickets were admitted and preference was given to people living in the neighbourhood, women with children, and the aged. The migration of hundreds of people from all parts of the city to Portway Tunnel was stopped.

This notorious shelter has been dealt with at length, not because it was in any way typical, but because it was such a glaring exception. Its story also illustrates the kind of difficulties which occasionally arose out of the prejudice and ignorance of some sections of the population and the perversity of individuals.

Even in this horrible den an organized community life developed. While there was wrangling and recrimination there was also rough kindness and generous co-operation. If shelter life sometimes demonstrated human nature at its worst, at other times it showed people at their best. It is difficult to measure the influence of such experiences upon the lives and characters of those who went through them, but it is erroneous to assume that they were wholly bad. Friendships were formed in the shelter which still endure; scarcely a night passed unilluminated by some act of magnanimity; there were innumerable unrecorded instances of kindness and forbearance which were not without inspiration.

The psychologist, the health officer and the police deplored



the communal shelters, and the authorities were undoubtedly right in deciding that the worst of them, Portway, should be cleared. The period of bombing was so short in Bristol that it is doubtful whether the adverse psychological effects were very great. Although it is not suggested here that shelters were desirable places, it would appear that opinions based upon the reports of psychiatrists may tend to err too far on the gloomy side. People could sit in comparative safety and enjoy the gossip of friends and neighbours, the spirit was often high and even where there was no gossip there was frequently much grim courage, as was illustrated by an old cripple who had been wheeled into a specially safe place in Wills Hall, Bedminster. That night the bombs were crashing in the vicinity and when the lady in charge happened to hear the old man grumbling she naturally thought that his nerve was beginning to break. "Never mind, Mr. X," she said kindly, "You are quite safe here, so don't be afraid." "Afraid, be damned!" was the truculent rejoinder, "You've wheeled me into a bloody draught."

While the official policy of dispersion was probably correct from the point of view of preserving life and preventing the spread of infection, it was nonetheless true that people so dispersed were often depressed. It was far easier to bear cold, hunger and all manner of discomforts surrounded by friends and acquaintances in a communal shelter than to sit alone in a half-flooded Anderson with nothing to do but listen to the explosion of bombs and the roar of a burning city. In a communal shelter the air raid could be forgotten because it could not be heard, but in an Anderson shelter this was out of the question. Moreover, men and women engaged in civil defence work could put more heart into their task when they knew that their families were in a place of comparative security.

The proportion of temperamentally unstable people in the population proved to be somewhat higher than had been believed before the war. This group included every variety from the highly imaginative and nervous to the sub-normal. Unfortunately, they were the people who were most loquacious and most in evidence. The courageous and the self-controlled folk, who constituted the vast majority, were usually occupied with some necessary task and thus were not so conspicuous. So it

came about that a minority of the fearful probably exercised a much greater influence upon the minds of their fellows than in normal times. Fortunately, however, it was also discovered that cheerfulness and courage were as infectious as despondency and fear.

The naturally gloomy were encouraged in their misery by those who wished to further their own revolutionary purposes through the spread of a spirit of despair. "If the war is stopped," they whispered, "all this misery will cease at once. Your men and women will return from the fighting forces and happiness will prevail." It was useless to continue the war, since Germany was already victorious; it was only a matter of time until Great Britain must be compelled to give in; the United States would never do anything for the Allies, so why go on with the hopeless struggle? This defeatist propaganda was a source of anxiety to the authorities, but it scarcely touched the mass of the people. Here again their inherent common sense, their tough moral fibre and their irrepressible good humour came to their assistance. They faced life as they found it and did not disguise the fact that their lot was often miserable, but anyone who hinted that this was a reason for surrender was regarded by them with pity or contempt.

The Communists, whose complaints were unceasing, demanded peace at any price, and continued to cry out for deep shelters. Indeed, they attempted to use the reluctance of the Government to adopt this policy as a stimulus to popular anger. The civic authorities were denounced because, it was insinuated, they were obviously more anxious to preserve old, useless documents than human lives. Why should worthless archives be so carefully preserved in expensive, dry, well-heated and ventilated stores while the men and women of Bristol were left to fend for themselves as best they could in the squalor of the Portway Tunnel?

The work of the shelter marshals was splendidly supported by the clergy of every denomination. Confronted by a common calamity, doctrinal differences were for the moment forgotten and Catholics, Anglicans of every degree, Nonconformists of all sorts and Jews worked together with the utmost goodwill and in perfect amity. Soon, therefore, the majority of the large communal shelters were well-conducted places, each of which

had its own established routine. When on the night of 16 March 300 people sheltering in the crypt of St. Michael's Church were compelled to flee for their lives because the church above them was set on fire, and a number of people were killed in the crypt of St. Barnabas, the official view that people should not be massed together appeared to be amply justified.

With the end of heavy bombing the use of shelters diminished rapidly. Unlike some other towns Bristol never had a large permanent shelter population and by June 1942, that is within fourteen months after the last extensive raid on the city, only about 250 people still used shelters regularly each night.

## X

### THE EXODUS FROM THE CITY

HEAVY raiding quickly demolished Bristol's reputation as a city of refuge. An outward movement of people therefore began which carried with it not only recent arrivals but part of the city's normal population, rich and poor, drawn from every social group and every walk of life. The more fortunate of these migrants settled down comfortably in hotels or lodgings, or with friends and relations in the country. There, some of them remained for a year or so and until all fear of enemy attack was past. Others absented themselves for a few months only, or for a few weeks, or for a weekend, and in fact as long as their money lasted.

At first, as Bristol was not classified as a dangerous area, the Ministry of Health refused to grant billeting allowances or other financial aids to those who went of their own accord. The whole city should have been declared an evacuation area in December 1940, and the removal of women and children authorized forthwith. This was not done until May, and there is no doubt that in consequence of the six months' unnecessary delay, resulting from official hesitation, some avoidable suffering was inflicted upon women and children.

Meanwhile, the Rotary Club, the churches, and other bodies, to the limit of their resources, helped those who wished to leave the city. The Lord Mayor's War Services Council made grants and the W.V.S. was always at hand. For the most part, however, particularly during the winter of 1940-41, the movement was spontaneous, unorganized and haphazard. Had it not been for the work of voluntary bodies, the chaos and the suffering would have been much greater than it was. This episode affords another lesson to be pondered deeply by those who in their doctrinaire zeal would sweep away all voluntary effort, and who would entrust the whole task of ameliorative social work to the

cold hands and stiff joints of slow, creaking, rheumatically bureaucracy.

At this time the situation of mothers of large families in the bombed parts of the city was deplorable. Some schools were temporarily closed, and during the whole war fifteen of them were destroyed. As so many of the men were absent in one or other of the fighting services or were engaged on wartime work in distant places, paternal control was wanting. Children with nothing to do were running wild on the streets and getting out of hand. Gas, water and electricity supplies were continually failing, and it was becoming more and more difficult to keep the children clean and free from infection. Lurid stories circulated in the poorer quarters of the city about the numbers of boys and girls who had already been killed in the raids, and so anxious, tired and often undernourished mothers dreaded some new disaster as darkness closed down each night. Even in normal times, it is in January and February that colds, influenza and epidemics of various kinds are to be expected, but now, with insufficient coal to warm their homes, living in damaged houses and with the thought of enemy action constantly in mind, the prospect was profoundly gloomy. Ministers of religion, doctors and social workers were agreed that there was much misery and unhappiness in the city and that, unless the Government changed its policy, the volume was certain to increase.

While officials enquired, deliberated, and failed to take action, the people themselves took the matter in hand. Various estimates have been made of the number of those affected by the exodus which now took place, but none of them can be regarded as anything more than rough approximations. In some areas, it was said, between four per cent and ten per cent of the population had moved out permanently or went out each night, but in others the movement was slight. A baker in Brislington stated that out of 140 houses on his round fifty had been evacuated. One clergyman reported that out of 953 houses known to him, 121 had been compulsorily and eighty voluntarily evacuated, and that 235 were left empty each night by people who went either to shelters or into the country. Another clergyman estimated that fifteen per cent of the school children had left his parish. Still another believed that one-third of his

parishioners left their homes at night, mainly for the country. In the period just before and just after nightfall the volume of outgoing people was undoubtedly at times large. Thus, one eyewitness compared the swarms on the roads leading out of Bristol to a bank holiday crowd and it reminded another of "Piccadilly in the rush hour." At its greatest extent it must have amounted to many thousands but in quieter periods it fell off to a few hundred. A country clergyman reported that each night during December and January in the neighbourhood of 1000 strangers asked him for assistance but that at the most he had room in his church house for about 150. He went on to say that those who came to him in their distress had frequently been in such a hurry to get away that they did not stop to dress themselves but rushed from their homes with their coats pulled on over their pyjamas. Every night, he said, hundreds whom he could not help passed through his parish to Brockley Combe, Burrington Combe and other places.

Many fled on foot, with no particular goal in mind, save a desire for security and a blind belief that this would be found in the country. Some of them, however, went in their cars or those of their friends. Often neighbours would combine to charter a vehicle of some sort into which they crammed their women and children. Outgoing lorries carried hundreds of refugees for nothing while some lorry drivers charged a shilling a head and with luck these passengers might be allowed to remain in the vehicle all night, parked in a country lane. More often they were dumped on the roadside and left to shift for themselves as best they could. As it often happened that no shelter could be found, many remained in the open through the dreary hours of a long winter's night, appalled by the distant spectacle of the havoc that was being wrought upon the city they had left. Sometimes they crept into barns and outhouses but frequently they slept in ditches and under hedges. When dawn came they were cold, stiff, hungry, and perplexed about the difficult task of returning.

It was the opinion of the clergy and others that this unorganized movement usually failed to help those whose need was greatest. Women with large families whose husbands were absent, the old and the infirm, were left behind, while the physically fit escaped. Again, some who could have gone refused

to move since they had been instructed by the authorities to "Stay put." These people, and they were among the soundest in the community, awaited official orders, but refused of their own accord to arrange for the removal of themselves and their families lest they should lay themselves open to the double charge of indiscipline and cowardice. If, as they had been told, they were now in the battle line, they felt that they should behave like good soldiers and obey orders. So they remained at home, but angry. They were angry because they felt that they were neglected, and this feeling was increased by gossips who whispered that they were being deserted by the well-to-do who could afford to pay for their transport and keep. How, it was asked, did these nightly flitters get their petrol? "It's Bedminster fellows, our sons and husbands, who risk their lives bringing oil to England so that the rich in their cushy jobs can dodge doing their duty." This was both unjust and false for, as has been said, rich and poor alike shared in this dash to the country. But, false or not, it promoted social bitterness and helped to undermine the war spirit. In the conditions which at that time prevailed, however, it would be unfair to blame harassed men and women, usually ignorant of the facts, oppressed by fear, for not being coldly judicial.

There were other reasons which made this nocturnal migration undesirable. Houses were left unprotected by those who should have been there to preserve their homes from destruction. The men and women left behind who were bravely fighting the fires naturally resented the additional burdens thrown upon them by their selfish or unthinking fellow citizens. Then again, fear for the safety of their families was beginning to affect the spirit of men in the fighting services. They heard of the savage attacks made upon their city and were embittered when they read in letters from home of the way in which their wives were apparently being neglected.

Nor were the conditions in the country much better. Complaints reached the Regional Commissioner, the Lord Mayor, and the Emergency Committee about the misbehaviour of some of those who sought a haven in the villages. Country people were disturbed by the noise of the wandering strangers and by being continually knocked up in the middle of the night by those in search of lodgings.

Among these nightly evacuees there were some men and women in the prime of life who had no apparent encumbrances. They should have remained at the post of danger but chose instead the ignominious path of flight, obsessed by concern for the safety of their skins. This was the contemptible minority who well deserved the epithet, "the yellow convoy," bestowed upon them by their more resolute neighbours. It was the custom of such people to spend the evening pleasantly in some country public house, to which no doubt they brought a golden harvest. If no raid occurred by closing time, they returned home, but if the enemy attacked the city they remained in the village. When they found that the local police had no quarters to offer them they were full of complaints. Though this craven group was small, it caused a disproportionate amount of anger in both town and country. For the most part the movement was made up of frightened women and children, and of men whose sense of responsibility for the safety of their families was at war with their sense of duty. Torn by opposing loyalties they left the city in shame and it was among such men that the demand for the establishment of an organized system of evacuation for women and children was strongest.

General evacuation, however, was far easier to contemplate than to carry into effect. If all the women who were not directly engaged in some form of war work left the city at once, a very large number of canteens would be required by those who remained behind. This would have been so large, in fact, that the authorities knew that it was impracticable. Moreover, Ministry of Health officials and others had first contended that general evacuation could not be carried through. All available space, according to them, had already been occupied by previous movements from other parts of the country. This was an opinion with which neither the Emergency Committee nor the citizens of Bristol as a whole could concur and, as it afterwards turned out, they were right and the officials were wrong. Another reason for doing nothing in this matter was put forward by those who presumed to speak for the trading community. If general evacuation took place, they argued, shop-keepers would lose their livelihood; but the grim retort that a temporarily absent customer in the country was preferable to a dead one at home was unanswerable.



Early in December 1940, Alderman Cox, Chairman of the Education Committee, raised the question of evacuating school children from badly bombed areas. Surely, he urged, if general evacuation was impossible, this at least could be done, and he kept returning to this theme until he had his way. After repeated approaches had been made by various voluntary bodies, a joint deputation of the Emergency Committee, the Education Committee and the Health Committee put the matter squarely before the Ministry of Health; this approach was warmly supported by the Regional Commissioner. When the Minister of Health visited Bristol in January he was personally canvassed on this subject, and such a mass of evidence was laid before him that he was compelled to give his sanction. On 25 January, therefore, it was at last agreed that the school children in all that part of the city which lay south of the river, together with those living at Avonmouth, Shirehampton and the central area of Bristol should be sent away. For the majority of mothers this was good news indeed. So long as they knew their children were to be safe they were ready and anxious to remain where they were and to do their duty.

Contrary to what had been repeatedly stated, reception areas were found at once and the first parties were ready to go within less than a month after official sanction was received. In the four days beginning 18 February the first elementary school parties of 6370 children set out for Devon and Cornwall. In April and again at the end of May more parties followed from other parts of the city by then classified as evacuation districts. Including 6671 privately sent away, together with those from secondary, technical and special schools, upwards of 20,000 school children left the city between February 1941 and March 1942. By this latter date, however, some 10,000 had already returned, a state of affairs which was viewed with considerable misgivings by the Emergency Committee, because more raids were still expected.

In addition to school children other groups were evacuated in the war years. These included expectant mothers, for whom special maternity homes and hospitals were found, and mothers with children under school age. By March 1943, Bristol was maintaining sixteen residential nurseries in the country for the accommodation of 473 babies. Homeless invalids, the infirm,

the blind, and some, though by no means all, of the aged were sent out of the city.

The drift back, however, continued and finally, on 26 October 1944, the Emergency Committee announced that with the exception of children under five in residential nurseries, candidates for the School Certificate examination at the end of that term, and some others, Bristol's evacuees were to return home.

To begin with the scheme was almost ruined by misleading and false rumours about the treatment of Bristol children in one district. Unfortunately this subject was taken up by a metropolitan newspaper. No matter what Alderman Cox and his fellow members of the Education Committee could say and do, some parents were gravely disturbed, and before all the facts were known a few of them had brought their children home. In the main, the receiving local authorities behaved with great generosity and kindness; the foster-parents were considerate and helpful and the local communities did what they could to assist. Naturally there were some misfits, for not all of Bristol's children were angels. There were some foster-parents who did not want these young people, but they were exceptions.

During the summer of 1942, statements were received by the Local Information Committee which impelled it to turn its attention to evacuation problems. In its report it declared that ignorance on the part of parents about the scheme, their natural desire to see their children and of the children to come home were the chief causes of trouble. The report recommended that a pamphlet should be prepared for the information of parents and that every effort should be made to ensure that they would be kept continually informed about the well-being of their sons and daughters. It was suggested also that they should be instructed not to visit them too often and always to see that the foster-parents were told in advance of their coming. Reduced fares were to be granted for occasional visits and it was recommended that some simple arrangement should be made to enable parents to meet their children without trespassing unduly upon the hospitality of the foster-parents. Such difficulties as these were of course to be expected, but, thanks to this scheme, Bristol children were enabled to live in healthy surroundings and to attend school unperturbed by the war.

Bristol will always be grateful to the people of Somerset, Devon and Cornwall for the manner in which so many of them assisted her at this very trying time of her history. It was the teachers, however, who carried the heaviest burden. For them evacuation meant the closing of homes and serious uprooting. It also often entailed much discomfort and additional work out of school hours, but they endured all these things bravely, and if the scheme was far more successful than many believed it could possibly be, this was mainly due to the teachers' willing and intelligent co-operation.

It would be an exceedingly difficult task to attempt to assess accurately the full effects of evacuation on the people of Bristol. The removal of children, aged parents and invalid relatives from the dangers and discomforts of recurring attack gave great relief to the fit and active who remained at home. Freed from the continual anxiety that had previously oppressed them, these men and women could now play their proper part in civil defence and give their undivided attention to their work. Again, for a time at least, evacuation also helped to alleviate the intensified over-crowding which resulted from the destruction of so many private dwellings. Lastly, the evidence available also appears to show that, while a few of them found it difficult to readjust themselves to home conditions on their return, generally speaking the physical condition of children was improved by their stay in the country.

## XI

### PROBLEMS OF HEALTH AND MORALE

IN 1939 the health authorities believed that the war would add to their work in three ways in particular. They anticipated a great increase in the number of personal injuries of all kinds, and they made their plans accordingly. Secondly, it was fully expected that the enemy would make use of poison gas. Thirdly, it was thought that all the peacetime problems of health would be intensified and that the calls made upon the medical services would be very much greater than in normal times.

After each serious enemy attack, the population was instructed by poster, loudspeaker van, and through the various civil defence services, about the boiling of water and the precautions that should be taken when water was stored in baths, buckets or other receptacles. In spite of all this publicity, some people, too lazy to go to the proper places for their water supply, or too stupid to listen to the instructions they were given, persisted in drinking from fire-hoses. As this water was in most instances pumped direct from the river, they were fortunate if they received nothing worse than a bad taste in the mouth. On the whole, the precautions taken were successful, but while there was sufficient water for cooking and drinking purposes the fracture of mains cut off regular supplies and put pasteurization plants out of action. Pure milk was thus rendered scarce and this was a considerable inconvenience to parents with young children. The milkless day also caused widespread discontent.

Foodstuffs salvaged from damaged granaries and other stores were carefully examined by the food inspectors before they were allowed to pass into the hands of traders. Throughout the war the research facilities of the University were at the service of the civic authority. A notable contribution was made by Dr. H. G. H. Kearns of the Long Ashton Research Station. On his suggestion lethane was used to fight the fly pest in food stores

and warehouses and later for many other purposes, including the disinfecting of shelters.

The recurring alerts and raids of 1940-41 destroyed the routine of home life, and normal habits of cleanliness were neglected. The results were soon apparent. About fifteen per cent of the children evacuated in 1941 were found to have verminous heads, while scabies and other skin diseases were not unknown among the shelter population.

From the point of view of health, the port was one of the most vulnerable sections of the city. Sailors, some of whom came from countries where health regulations were slack, and where strange and terrible diseases were rampant, were continually coming and going. It was therefore essential that the port should be kept under strict surveillance; otherwise it might have become a forcing bed of disease. Special precautions were taken, too numerous to mention here; ships were visited by health officers, and suspected cases were isolated as soon as they were discovered. A good example of the devices employed was afforded by the typhus teams. Each of these units contained a doctor, a nurse, a sanitary inspector, an ambulance driver and trained attendants. A disinfection team was also organized and stood by. Here again, lethane, Bristol's panacea, was the preparation chosen both as a preventive and as a disinfecting agent.

The effects of the war upon the ordinary problems of health were in some respects surprising. While in 1940 the figure for infantile mortality was the highest for a decade, that for 1944 was the lowest in the city's records. Maternal mortality showed a downward trend throughout the period and the lowest figure reached was attained in 1941. With the exception of that same year, the birth-rate showed a steady increase until 1944 when it was higher than it had been since 1923. Illegitimacy increased in 1942, 1943 and 1944, while the death rate during the war years was somewhat higher than it had been in the period immediately before 1939. In view of the hardships of the time, and the anxiety in which so many people lived, such a rise was to have been expected. Perhaps the chief reason for this was the absence of so high a proportion of the young and virile elements of the population, and the wonder is that the increase was not greater.

The history of infectious diseases during this period is even more remarkable. Thus, apart from a rise in 1940, diphtheria declined steadily, thanks to a vigorous immunization campaign. Again, in 1941 scarlet fever was less prevalent than at any time in the medical records of the city, but the fact that during this year so large a number of school children was absent probably contributed to this satisfactory condition. As might have been expected, pneumonia and bronchitis increased in 1940 and 1941, especially during the months when thousands of people spent much of their time in shelters. There was also an upward trend in the incidence of cerebro-spinal fever in the same years, but, taking the war period as a whole, death from this dreadful malady was much less common than it had been during the 1914-18 war.

Prior to 1939, Bristol had an unenviable reputation among English cities because of the prevalence of tuberculosis. In the war period, since it was virtually impossible to provide adequate hospital space for the isolation of patients, and doctors and nurses were so few in proportion to the immense amount of extra work they were called on to perform, proper treatment could not be given. As a result of this, there was a dangerous increase in this insidious plague. The Medical Officer of Health, Dr. R. H. Parry, believed that in the days to come the community must pay dearly for this unavoidable neglect, which was in fact only a part of the price of war. Between 1939 and 1945 venereal disease also advanced to some extent, but, owing to improved treatment, more clinics and advice, this was substantially less than was expected.

In Dr. Parry's opinion the health of the city did not deteriorate appreciably because of wartime diet. It was true, of course, that owing to the lack of fresh fruit, expectant mothers suffered for want of Vitamin C, but the distribution of cod liver oil, fruit juice and priority milk, went far towards making good this deficiency. Speaking generally, he considered that the widespread practice of providing good canteen meals for work people in offices and factories helped materially to lessen the adverse results of shortages of food in the home.

Inseparable from the problem of health was that of morale, which was much discussed, though not always understood. Streams of letters on this subject, recommendations and other

expressions of opinion poured in upon the Regional Commissioner, the Lord Mayor, the members of the Emergency Committee and all others who might be considered to have any influence in the determination of policy. Some of these were sober, painstaking appraisements of the situation, based upon careful observation and sound knowledge, and others were hysterical, sentimental, ill considered effusions. Taken as a whole they conveyed a highly over-coloured and largely false picture of Bristol at that time. One grave danger that confronts the amateur investigator in this difficult field of measuring public opinion and, indeed, one that confronts the expert as well, is the tendency to base too many conclusions on phenomena that are merely strange or unusual. In order to approach truth, even at a distance, the normal and the ordinary must always be borne in mind and certainly, in Bristol, it was the normal and the ordinary that preponderated.

Whenever it was possible, the majority of the citizens went about their business as usual. The rhythm of everyday existence was maintained; otherwise the life of the city would have been brought to a standstill. Whatever might have occurred on the previous night, the baker still went his rounds in the morning, and the milkman and the postman came, though sometimes late. Shops and banks were open; buses ran and thousands of housewives stood for hours in ever-lengthening queues. Typists and shop assistants turned up punctually even though the way to work lay through debris-encumbered streets. Factory workers in their thousands clocked in and even the humble charwoman with her scrubbing brush was there, sometimes a little before her time in order to help in clearing up the mess. Certainly, the morale of Bristol was not as bad as it was painted by a few highly imaginative, self-styled experts.

From the outbreak of hostilities the authorities recognized the importance of keeping public morale constantly under review. As the dreary winter of 1940-41 drew towards its close, and more particularly when the enemy resumed his attacks in March, various investigations took place. The city had been under a terrible strain for a long time and it was possible that the breaking point might not be far distant.

From December onwards the Child Guidance Clinic carried out a series of surveys in shelters, rest centres, and among

children who had been evacuated. The investigators did not pretend to pronounce upon the general morale of the city. They were mainly concerned with the condition of the more unstable sections of the population, the extent to which raiding had caused nervous breakdowns, the best methods of preventing such disasters, and remedial treatment. The reports the committee produced were undoubtedly of great assistance to the Medical Officer of Health and his staff, in particular, but they also contained much factual material which was of immediate significance to those responsible for the government of the city. According to these reports, between one in four and one in six in the population could not stand up to prolonged anxiety. Such people tended to seek for a renewal of confidence by congregating with friends and neighbours in shelters, and it was the view of the committee that if these refuges were kept clean, well-ordered and warm, much good would result. If, moreover, the nocturnal migrations were regulated and suitable accommodation found in the country this movement also might be rendered beneficial. To prevent breakdowns in morale, the committee held that people must have adequate sleep. The provision of food, the maintenance of well-warmed premises and the efficient running of all welfare services at this time were also emphasized. The committee believed that in Bristol about 110,000 people might be considered as belonging to the group that could not stand the strain of bombing, but this figure seems unduly high. Unfortunately their evidence went to show that the percentage of mental defectives in the population was much larger than had hitherto been supposed. Some neurotics stood up well to wartime conditions but more collapsed, some temporarily, some permanently. Normal people, in the vast majority of cases, soon recovered. In consequence of the recommendations made in these reports, shelter policy was modified in various ways and conditions were greatly improved. As has been said, however, these enquiries were directed mainly to that section of the population whose condition brought it within the ambit of medical treatment. Only in a general and incidental way was the committee concerned with the normal sections of the population, the bulk of whom never appeared in shelters or rest centres and who took no part in the nocturnal migration.



Early in the spring it was reported in the city that its morale had been studied by one of those organizations which presumes to pronounce upon the state of public opinion at any given time. According to the team that had visited Bristol for a few days, the city's morale was bad, the spirit of the people was low and things were generally unsatisfactory. This news came as a great surprise to those on the spot who were most concerned to keep their fingers on the pulse of the public and thought they knew the facts. It was therefore decided that Bristol should make an investigation of her own.

As understood by Bristolians, morale meant the moral condition of the people as regards the carrying on of the war and confidence in victory. Exultation arising from military successes, depression after defeat, boredom, the black-out, good or bad shelter conditions, political propaganda, the will to victory, passive acceptance of conditions, cheerful or gloomy bearing and a hundred other things all help to affect morale. In war-time it is even more difficult than in times of peace to gauge what a great community feels and thinks. It was recognized that if all the phenomena were to be examined, several months would be required and that this was far too complicated a task to be undertaken at such a time. Therefore all that was attempted in this investigation was to arrive at something a little better than a fairly strong conjecture. But even this, it was felt, would be useful.

Many other difficulties beset such investigations, as, for example, local patriotism which sees everything through rose-coloured spectacles. Rash generalization based upon insufficient or incomplete evidence is another. A photographic impression resulting from the momentary opinions of selected people picked out at random may be entirely misleading. In wartime violent fluctuations in public opinion occur as the result of depression after disaster or elation after victory. These, however, are little more than ripples on the surface of a lake. The investigator also had to bear in mind the period of the enquiry. During the three weeks or so in which it was carried through there were two enemy raids, two periods of recovery and some nights and days completely free from enemy attack. It was the month of April, but it was a cold, disappointing April, and the news from the battle front was mixed. There were victories in Ethiopia

and increased triumphs by night-fighters in Britain and by bombers against German towns. It was memorable for the magnificent victory of Cape Matapan, and people's hearts were stirred by the heroic courage of the Imperial forces in Greece. On the debit side, people were depressed by the news of the battle of the Atlantic and by the sudden reversal of the war in Libya. This period witnessed the courageous defiance hurled at Hitler by Yugoslavia, so quickly followed by the brutal destruction of Belgrade. In Bristol, the effect of these reverses was to some extent offset by the steadily increasing might of the anti-aircraft barrage and by a general improvement in the efficiency of all services concerned with conditions after a raid.

The enquiry was intended to test the opinion of as large a cross-section of the population as was possible in the time and with the resources available. A carefully prepared *questionnaire* was therefore sent out, with a covering letter which explained the object of the investigation, to a wide range of voluntary bodies and representatives of the professions, business, trade unions, housewives and the general public. In order to supplement such evidence, a special study was made of opinion in a selected number of public houses. The organizations and persons to whom the *questionnaire* was sent were asked not to content themselves with merely returning their own unsupported opinions. As it turned out, while a few failed to do this, a surprisingly high proportion were quite objective and many of the replies were in effect the result of separate, smaller investigations. Well over 1000 answers were received and the total number of people touched by this enquiry must have amounted to several thousands.

Taking the long view and allowing for fluctuations due to victory in the field, violent raids and the like, it appeared that permanent morale had not to any appreciable extent declined. Unless there was some especially adverse cause which affected individuals, such as the loss of a member of the family, the recovery of normal people was rapid, and this bore out the conclusion of the Child Guidance Clinic investigation. As might have been expected, it was found that people were tired and the report therefore recommended the launching of a "Sleep more" campaign. Boys and girls who had spent the previous

night in shelters were frequently too exhausted to attend school on the following day. It was recommended, therefore, that all of Bristol should be declared an evacuation area and that adults should be given holidays and periods of rest in camps or other places.

Next to the cry for evacuation, one of the most widely expressed demands made by those who replied to the *questionnaire* was that the spiritual life of the people should not be allowed to suffer through air raids. Wherever it could be done, war-damaged churches and chapels should be rendered usable as quickly as possible. If a place of worship had been destroyed alternative accommodation should be provided and there should be more meetings of a religious nature and more community hymn singing.

Faith in surface shelters had been undermined by the obvious defects of those erected at the beginning of the war and there was a slight, though limited, belief in the efficacy of deep shelters, well equipped with bunks in which people could have a good night's rest. The high-explosive bomb was the most generally feared feature of the air raids. Gas, by that time, was no longer taken seriously. The growing power of the anti-aircraft barrage had encouraged the majority, though it appeared that the noise had depressed a few. The knowledge that incendiaries could be mastered had increased confidence and people with work to do were less affected by raids than others. Repeatedly the replies pointed out that high spirits were even more infectious than low ones, a view which also supported the opinions of the Child Guidance Clinic investigation. Like the latter, evidence now collected showed that the supply of food was all-important and that meals should be made more generally available after attacks. It was held that much good would result from the establishment of British Restaurants in Bristol. The importance of the speedy salvage of household furniture and of quick provision of first aid repairs to houses were also emphasized. A few people believed that the authorities tended to be too easily satisfied with what they considered to be good enough.

Morale had been seriously affected by the shortcomings of the local transport system. Regular bus-users whose homes were in the country were compelled to wait for hours before they



The horror of a daylight raid. . . . It was the rush hour . . . 9 a.m. in Broad Weir on 28 August 1942.

## NOTHING DAUNTED



Bristolians inspect the damage in Park Street, one of the City's most famous thoroughfares, after the first great fire raid of November 1940.



Fire and frost could do their worst—one night while the shops and houses burned the water from the fire hoses froze—but life went on, even cheerfully, with “business as usual.” In districts where shops were destroyed, trucks and stalls traded in the open air.

could find a place and they were sometimes obliged to spend the whole night in the city. Bus officials were harried and over-driven and some of them became querulous and hectoring. This in turn led to rudeness on the part of the would-be passengers, who felt frustrated and angry. More buses were demanded, therefore, and later services.

On the subject of the news many people let themselves go. Clearly there was a widespread feeling that if morale declined it would be due to the belief that the public was only being told what certain people thought was good for it to know. "We have the right to be trusted by the authorities, just as the Prime Minister trusts us." More explanations of news policy were asked for and if this was done it was asserted that the majority of the present critics would be turned into friends. Some regarded the news service as satisfactory but others were of the opposite opinion and there was a wide variety of view as to the kind of news that should be disseminated and the manner in which this should be done.

It was a common belief that there was little difference between the morale of men and women. According to a few of the answers, there should be more dances, concerts, variety shows, cinemas, lectures, and organized games, and there was a considerable demand for more military bands. While there was some grumbling about "red tape," it was the general view that the sound state of the public morale owed a great deal to the way in which local officials had discharged their duties. The maintenance of close personal links between those in authority and the man in the street, it was repeatedly stated, would do a great deal to keep morale steady and sound. As for the public houses, life seems to have gone on there as usual. There was talk about the war in some of them, there were some "dismal Jimmies," but usually these were treated as figures of fun. Everywhere apparently, or at least in the twenty odd public houses visited, Mr. Churchill was regarded as something in the nature of a deity.

In its final paragraph the report sums up the whole matter thus:

Those upon whom Providence has bestowed public trust, municipal office, or positions of leadership must never forget the responsibility which the enjoyment of these desirable things

imposes. Failures in the common citizens which may be condoned cannot be overlooked when committed by them. Bristol is proud of her great past, she has endured sieges in bygone times and been familiar with the shocks of war but in all her long annals there is no page more glorious than that which records the matchless courage of her people to-day. If in the time to come they are given courageous and devoted leadership, they will respond as they have already nobly responded. Their spirit now is high and it is the duty of their leaders to see that it remains high, for the issue of this war will be decided not on the ocean, not in the air, not upon the field of battle—it will be decided in the hearts of the men and women of Bristol and in the hearts of the men and women of the Empire. What John Bunyan wrote over two centuries and a half ago is still true: "... here lay the excellent wisdom of him that builded *Mansoul* that the walls could never be broken down, nor hurt, by the most mighty adverse Potentate unless the Towns-men gave consent thereto."

The people of Bristol did not give consent thereto.

## XII

### THE LORD MAYOR'S WAR SERVICES COUNCIL AND ITS WORK

ON 27 September 1939, the Lord Mayor, Alderman W. A. Winchester, called a meeting of representative citizens to explain his proposal that a Bristol War Appeals Committee should be established. Already a number of completely independent campaigns had been launched, and for some time it had been recognized by the Lord Mayor and his colleagues that, if chaos was to be avoided, these appeals should be canalized in some way. In the summer of 1940 the name of this body was altered to the Lord Mayor's War Services Council. At the end of October, 1940, the Lord Mayor had already received £10,336 6s od and from then on, particularly after heavy raiding began, contributions steadily increased until they became a flood.

In March, 1941, Alderman A. W. S. Burgess explained that it had been agreed that after the following November all local resources should be pooled in a national fund which the Bristol War Services Council would be able to draw on at need. "If you ask for £30,000," said Alderman Burgess, who was appointed to administer it, "you can have it." Before the war was over the Council was to ask for and to receive far more than that sum. Between November 1940 and 30 September 1941 the Council expended £26,710 on air raid relief. Early in 1942 it was stated that the total receipts amounted to £48,283; they were £70,969 in January 1943; over £95,000 in February 1944; and £105,967 in September 1945. At that time the Honorary Treasurer stated that the balance in hand amounted to £17,370. It, therefore, appears that during the war this body expended over £88,000 in all.

It allocated to particular groups the period during which their appeals might be made, and, in general, tried to ensure that the citizen would not be pestered unduly by requests for



help. Before the Assistance Board became the regular body to function on the spot after a raid the Lord Mayor's War Services Council distributed relief. It spent its funds wherever it felt that its help might be of service to the community and facilitate the war effort of the city. Thus, in the summer of 1940, aid was given for the establishment of a Citizens Advice Bureau, sponsored by the Council of Social Service, and throughout the ensuing years men and women from the Forces, strangers in the city and members of the general public, flocked to it with the most diverse enquiries.

The Lord Mayor's War Services Council, through its resourceful and always tactful Secretary, Mr. H. V. Hindle, did its best in a practical, unostentatious way to create a feeling of confidence and to make it known to those in distress that they were not forgotten. At Christmas 1940, as an emergency measure, small sums of money were distributed, either in cash or in token coupons, to those in genuine distress through enemy action. In this work the Council found the advice and knowledge of the clergy of all denominations invaluable. It was now discovered that they knew the people as no one else did, and it must be recorded here that throughout this trying period the clerical profession lived up nobly to the teachings of the gospel which it professed. Many a one who had scoffed at the parson in the past and had held his religion in little esteem now acquired a deep respect for the clergy and a new faith in Christianity.

By the aid of the Lord Mayor's grants, Christmas parties were organized for children in bombed areas; the Council generously interpreted the term "children" to include the very old as well as the very young and the Christmas season was lengthened out from December to March. During the course of the war, thanks to the efforts of this Council, it was possible to provide parties for some 50,000 school children and for about 25,000 Old Age Pensioners. This may have been tinkering with the problem, as was sometimes suggested, but in wartime there is a lot to be said for tinkering. Moreover, in this instance there was no doubt as to the beneficial effects of the work. The young and the old were cheered and the influence of these gatherings extended far beyond the families and friends of those who enjoyed them to warm the whole

community. Whenever they could spare the time, successive Lord Mayors, in full regalia, visited these parties where they were enthusiastically received by both old and young. The Council granted hundreds of pounds for the clothing of evacuated school children; subsidized lunch-hour concerts; financed rest homes, canteens and social centres for men and women in the services. It promoted a scheme for the extra-care of the wounded and sponsored the Social Centre for young people at the new Council House.

The main task of the Lord Mayor's War Services Council was, however, its investigation of the immediate and long-term needs of thousands of bombed-out people. The list of cases helped, which is to be found in the minutes of its executive committee's weekly meetings, conveys some conception of the scope and variety of this work. Here it is a newspaper round purchased for some unfortunate man; there a horse to help put someone back into business; somebody assisted in the temporary repair of a war-damaged house; recurring grants to injured people who lay ill for months and in some extreme cases for years. Orphans were provided with homes and their education costs met, even up to the university where necessary. The laconic references to these cases speak for themselves: "House blasted five times," "in hospital two years and permanently crippled," "old-age pensioner who had lived in air raid shelter for seven months," "husband and two children killed, herself and child injured," and so on. No case of suffering ever went uninvestigated or unrelieved if it came within the Council's terms of reference. Much of this work was unknown to the general public at the time and a great deal of it has since been forgotten even by those who benefited. It is fitting, therefore, that the achievements of this singularly efficient group of men and women should find a place in this book.

Perhaps the most spectacular phase of the work of the Lord Mayor's War Services Council was that performed in 1941 when it grappled with the task of providing rest periods for war-weary citizens. In the previous chapter it has been shown that Bristol's morale was on the whole sound, but before the winter ended her people were tired. For weeks at a time, over-worked men and women were unable to take off their clothes; there were thousands in the city who had not slept in a proper

bed for months and who had almost forgotten what clean sheets and linen felt like. Even before raiding began, it was recognized that, if people were not to break down under the strain of long hours of work, relaxation was essential, and the raids increased this need many times over.

The evacuation of school children authorized by the Ministry of Health in 1941 was permanent evacuation of a particular group, and did not touch those who required short periods of rest only. It was not until April that allowances for temporary evacuees were forthcoming, but it is worthy of record that the Lord Mayor's War Services Council covered all the costs of those whom it sent to its various rest homes that summer, including food, transport and lodgings.

By June, thanks to the grants of the Council, the churches, the Rotary Club and other voluntary bodies had settled 500 people in suitable country billets. With the support of an American agency, Mr. F. B. Whittaker purchased two cottages in Weston-in-Gordano, which were knocked together and turned into a rest home for bombed children. To commemorate the fact that one of these cottages had formerly been a smithy the place was given the name of "Bellows." Later on, at Cheddar, the same organization was responsible for the opening of a second home for children—"Arcadia Bellows."

Somerset and Gloucestershire were ready to do all they could to help, but it turned out that the large houses available in these counties were, in fact, of little use except for sudden mass evacuation should this ever occur. Their roominess was often deceptive and they had been equipped for the use of families, not communities. They had no modern lighting, their heating was primitive, their water supplies were insufficient, and their plumbing was obsolete. If they were to be made suitable for the reception of large numbers of people, the expenditure of considerable sums of money would be necessary. Even if it was decided to proceed with the renovation of one or more of these noble white elephants, it was doubtful whether the labour and requisite building materials could be obtained to carry through the most necessary alterations. As time was pressing and the need was great, a number of individuals interested in this subject were authorized to search for suitable premises. Axminster, Chard, Cirencester and other places in

Somerset and Gloucestershire were scoured for possible nursery schools and for private billets.

In April the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort offered the Lord Mayor a site for a camp at Hinnegar in Badminton Park and in doing so they placed the city still further in their debt. The War Services Council undertook to erect a temporary building there, to be used as a dining and recreation room, to supply tents and all necessary equipment and to bear all costs.

Before the end of April the Medical Officer of Health reported that Sidmouth was prepared to offer billets for one hundred families at a time for short periods of rest, at three day's notice, without charge. Blundell's School agreed to take in people during the vacation, and forty a week for four weeks took advantage of this generosity. Sidcot School also placed its buildings at the disposal of the Lord Mayor for the same period. Sunny Hill School, Bruton, opened its doors during August and the Headmistress and her staff did everything they could to make the visitors happy and comfortable. St. Mary's College, Cheltenham, also co-operated, while Clifton College, now far away in Bude, announced that during the vacation it was ready to help by placing its premises at the disposal of the Lord Mayor's War Services Council. Then in June the Headmistress of Sherborne Girls' School, offered to assist, and between 5 August and 2 September 150 were entertained there, each fortnight, amid the most delightful surroundings.

Boys and girls were sent away for short holidays to Sand Bay, Brean Down and other camps, but even all these generous contributions of living space did not satisfy Bristol's requirements. So the colleges of Oxford were approached. Bristol's connection with that University in the past had at times been intimate. She had given to Oxford many distinguished scholars and for centuries Oxford men were to be found among her leading citizens. When Bristol University College was established in the 'seventies of the last century, the dons of New College and Balliol helped the struggling institution with gifts of money and in various other ways. This fact is commemorated in the Council Room of the University, where the arms of New College are emblazoned on one of its windows, while those of Balliol appear on the window immediately opposite. The approach to Oxford came almost too late, for by the spring of

1941 some of the colleges were already taken over by Government departments and others had long since been booked up for summer schools and other activities. In spite of this Oxford responded generously. Balliol, Christ Church, Corpus Christi, Lady Margaret Hall, Magdalen, Merton, New College, Oriel, St. Hilda's, St. Hugh's, University College and Wadham, all offered to take in people from Bristol at reduced charges.

So the problem of premises for rest holidays was solved, but the Council's difficulties did not end there. The success of a scheme such as this largely depended on the kind of citizens sent from Bristol. The wrong people in Oxford, Sherborne, Blundell's and the rest could easily jeopardize the whole undertaking, and certainly all kinds and conditions wished to go. Each centre had its own character and facilities so that visitors who could settle down comfortably in one of them might be miserable in another, and it was essential that there should be no square pegs in round holes. Thousands of Bristolians of all ages, kinds and degrees were sent out during that summer but their behaviour everywhere was above reproach. Thus, although Oxford colleges were occupied for many weeks by them, the Lord Mayor was informed when the last visitor returned home that not sixpenceworth of damage had been caused.

The movement of these people out of Bristol laid additional burdens on the Ministries of Food and Health and the transport services; but they were borne without a grumble. Throughout that whole summer, in fact, Bristol received ready and cheerful help on all sides. Its own local food office was unwearying in its wish to co-operate, while the local offices in the various centres displayed remarkable forbearance. Provision and other firms in the city when asked for help usually contrived to find unsuspected supplies of food, and if, as sometimes happened, wartime regulations were strained in the process, Government officials were determined to be avuncular. Oxford, Reading and London were searched for food; the W.V.S. contributed from its stores; the hosts themselves were also active and resourceful, and saw to it that Bristol people were satisfied.

The visitors were expected to do a considerable number of the domestic chores, but they could not do them all. In some places teachers and local volunteers came forward to help, but it was necessary to send some additional assistants from Bristol,

including upwards of 100 university students. When the Oxford scheme was suggested it was recognized that a commandant of exceptional qualities would be required. The Bristolians were scattered throughout the city in a dozen colleges and there was thus a much heavier burden of administrative work to be done in Oxford than elsewhere. Thanks to the Y.W.C.A., the Lord Mayor's Council was able to procure the services of a perfect commandant, Mrs. M. Fenwick, who threw herself with enormous enthusiasm and energy into the work.

Other questions still remained. Of these perhaps the most important was that of entertainment. To leave hundreds of people to their own resources in strange surroundings would be to invite boredom, complaints and the defeat of the Council's intentions. In order to get over this difficulty a panel of singers, pianists, violinists, conjurers and elocutionists was built up. Some of them were professionals, some were distinctly amateur; some were good, some were not so good, but they were all keen and quite ready to be sent wherever the Council desired. It was the practice to provide a concert or other entertainment, a film (usually supplied by the Ministry of Information), and a lecture each week, but lectures were not much in demand. The visitors wanted amusement, not instruction, so the voluntary panel of entertainers worked hard throughout the summer months.

For thirteen weeks successive batches of city dwellers were refreshed by the quiet charm of Badminton Park. To begin with they were somewhat startled when cattle strayed over their playing-fields and disorganized their cricket, and on one occasion at least some of the women were greatly reassured when the Dowager Duchess of Beaufort showed them how easily these intruders could be driven off. They quickly became accustomed to country life and to the proximity of quiet, meditative cows who gazed at them in mild-eyed surprise. The Duke and Duchess, and the Duke's mother, were continually at hand to help with their advice and suggestions. Queen Mary paid the camp many surprise visits and generally kept it under her benevolent eye.

The Oxford experiment was an unqualified success. The Mayor and Council of the city, the representatives of the various ministries concerned, the university and college authorities spared no pains to ensure that the Bristol people should enjoy

themselves. The Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the W.V.S., the W.E.A., and the churches were everywhere ready with their help. There were picnics, river parties, tennis, cricket matches, and a variety of entertainment in the evenings, but none of this was overdone. Any who wished to sit quietly in the "quad" were left in peace. Among all the many people who competed with each other to make the visitors feel at home none were kinder than the college servants. In hall, the scouts waited on the guests with a courtesy and an alacrity that would have surprised the ordinary undergraduates in term time. They were on call in the common room and in the quadrangle and more than justified the opinion of so many old Oxford men that it is the college servants who personify the real spirit of the college. In saying this it is not implied that Masters, Rectors, Wardens, Deans, Chaplains and Fellows did not do their utmost to help. They did. But it was the scouts who came most into contact with the Bristolians and it is they who will always be best remembered by them. Not content with the performance of their regular duties, of their own freewill they organized special outings for the Bristol people.

Chatham House, which was at that time lodged in Balliol, turned from its heavy and important work to join in this carnival of hospitality by providing a delightful river party for the strangers, and so the story went on. The Bristolians, many of whom came from the poorest quarters of the city, were thus given a holiday such as they had never dreamed to be possible. In one college they asked to be allowed to plant a tree to commemorate their visit and as a lasting memorial of their gratitude.

Just like undergraduates, each group developed a strong college loyalty and was anxious to prove that its college was better than any other. In those quiet quadrangles, far removed from the scenes of war, after the bustle of the day's enjoyment was over, they found rest. Now, instead of the familiar drawl of the undergraduate, quadrangle and common room echoed to the homely accents of good broad Bedminster, Knowle West, and St. George.

During the summer the Lord Mayor visited Sherborne, Bruton, Badminton, and other places where Bristolians had been established. At the end of August he and his party

proceeded to Oxford in order that he might thank college, university and civic authorities, on behalf of himself and all his fellow citizens, for what they had done. His visit took on something in the nature of a triumphal progress as he moved from college to college and on Sunday morning, 31 August, a special service for the Bristolians was held in Balliol Chapel. The Lord Mayor, in full regalia, read the Lesson, and Dr. Albert Mansbridge, founder of the W.E.A. and various other organizations which exist for the promotion of the common good, preached the sermon. These visitors sang their hymns of praise and gave thanks for the kindness they had received in that place where so many Balliol men in their youth had come to worship and to repeat their College Prayer:

Almighty God, who has in Thy good providence disposed the hearts of men to mutual charity, that here on earth in diverse brotherhoods they may prepare the coming of Thy heavenly kingdom, we give Thee thanks for every human fellowship, but more especially that Thou hast prospered this our ancient house, and still dost guide the footsteps of her children.

The footsteps of these strangers had been guided to Oxford where they had found sanctuary, and if that long line of Masters of Balliol which stretches far back into the mists of the Middle Ages could have witnessed this scene they would surely have approved.

During September all the rest centres closed down and the people came home refreshed. Though the scheme on a large scale was at an end, an hotel was rented in Bournemouth to which hundreds of people were sent during the winter, and, indeed, for the remainder of the war Bristol retained premises there which were used for her tired people. The camp at Hinnegar was reopened during the summer of 1942 and again in 1943. Thus thousands of Bristol's citizens were given a much needed rest.



## XIII

### THE EBB AND FLOW OF WAR

EARLY in the spring of 1941, German plotting, coupled with local jealousies and private ambition, produced a revolt in Iraq. For several weeks that country was a special source of anxiety to the over-burdened Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Wavell, at Cairo, and to the British Chiefs of Staff and Cabinet in Britain. Resolute action by the men on the spot, however, and speedy succour from outside convinced the rebels that their German advisers had misled them. An armistice was signed on 31 May; the Germans fled and British troops assumed control of the oil-fields.

Meanwhile the Greek campaign, from which so much had been hoped, ended in disaster. Without waiting to secure his latest conquests the enemy invaded Crete on 20 May, where a small, though inadequately equipped British force, mainly New Zealand and Australian, had established itself, together with some remnants of the Greek army. In the course of the next week the enemy demonstrated to the world the meaning of full-scale, determined air invasion and thus opened a new chapter in the history of war. Despite the gallant co-operation of the navy, with all the heavy losses in men and ships that this involved, and despite the spirited resistance of Sir Bernard Freyberg and his force, it was soon evident that the island was untenable. Once again, therefore, a British army had to be rescued by sea from the open beaches under the very nose of the triumphant foe, and once more this hazardous operation was completed, though not without heavy losses.

Now that Roumania and Bulgaria had become German satellites, with Yugoslavia and Greece overrun and the Aegean Islands rapidly passing into German hands, and with German influence dominant over the French in Syria, the situation of Turkey became critical. Since the French spurned the proffered hand of their former ally, it was necessary to clear them and

their German friends out of Syria. In June, therefore, was fought the saddest and most distasteful campaign of the whole war, a campaign which Britons everywhere believed to be the needless result of Vichy blindness. Happily it was short. By the beginning of July the British and the Free French were in possession of Damascus, the Germans and their puppets had fled, and Turkey's southern frontier was safe.

The fighting of this year showed repeatedly how superior German armour was to that of their opponents, and this was a lesson which the Allies took to heart. From July to November there was comparative stagnation on the African front, much to the regret of the Prime Minister. Then, at last, the British Eighth Army advanced again, Tobruk was relieved and before the end of the year Benghazi was once more in British hands. Hopes of a speedy victory in this theatre of war were high, but these were destined soon to be dashed. In the late autumn and early winter the eastern Mediterranean navy sustained heavy and repeated losses and at the turn of the year the full force of the German Luftwaffe was thrown into the African battle. Thus, at the end of 1941, as far as the Near East was concerned, the prospect was uncertain but gloomy.

But there was a credit side. On 5 May the Emperor of Ethiopia entered his capital again; the Duke of Aosta surrendered on the 17th, and Gondar, the last stronghold of Italy in Ethiopia, capitulated on 27 November. So the dream of a great Italian Empire in East Africa was shattered. In May the pursuit and destruction of the mighty battleship *Bismarck* was a notable victory whose brilliance was somewhat lessened by the loss of H.M.S. *Hood*. All the while, under President Roosevelt's leadership, the United States was moving closer and closer to war. American troops landed in Greenland in the late spring and in Iceland in July. The zone of American influence on the Atlantic Ocean steadily advanced eastward until, before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the Neutrality Act had been modified in order to enable American merchantmen to be armed and to enter belligerent waters. Another sign of the close friendship which existed between Great Britain and the United States was provided by the issue in August of the joint declaration of the American President and the British Prime Minister, now known as the Atlantic Charter. This document gave very

great satisfaction to all the free peoples of the world and strengthened Great Britain in her determination to fight until victory was won.

Perhaps the most important single event of that summer was Hitler's ill-judged onslaught on Russia which began on 22 June. This was followed, in July, by the signing of an Anglo-Russian agreement and, in September, by joint conversations in Moscow, between representatives of Great Britain and the United States on the one hand and the Russian Government on the other. As soon as possible after the opening of the German attack, the R.A.F. increased its assaults on Germany in order to lessen the strains on the U.S.S.R. During the months of August, September and October some 10,000 tons of bombs were hurled against Germany and German-occupied territory. Before the winter closed down upon the eastern front, however, the German armies had penetrated deep into Russia. In the north they stood before the gates of Leningrad; they were within striking distance of Moscow, from which, however, they were forced to retire, and they had engulfed the rich cornlands of the Ukraine and the great industrial area of southern Russia. In their victorious advance, confident of victory and contemptuous of retribution, they displayed a ruthlessness unparalleled in modern war. This was another lesson which the people of Britain took to heart. If Russia fell, their turn would come next, and they had full knowledge now of what this was certain to mean for them.

On 7 December 1941 the Japanese attacked both American and British territories and thus a new, unscrupulous, cruel enemy was ranged against Britain. Although this mad action of Japan drew the United States at once into war, everyone knew that some time must elapse before she could bring her mighty power to bear upon the fortune of battle. For the moment, therefore, though cheered by the knowledge that the United States was now with them, Great Britain and the Empire were well aware that for many months to come they must continue to fight alone. All of these resounding events, so confused in the general impression they produced, were eagerly watched from a distance by the people of Bristol.

Whether the news was good or bad, however, the factories of the city worked to capacity day and night and whatever

misfortunes the people experienced they went on with their jobs. Little reference has been made in this book to Bristol's industrial achievement. Mere lists of statistics of production have little meaning for any except the experts, and here it is sufficient to stress the fact that the city's output was enormous. Her great aircraft industry grew to gigantic proportions and the fame which it had already won was enhanced. Other branches of engineering also made notable contributions. The most diverse trades were swept into war work. Machines which had originally been designed for the manufacture of paper, tobacco and chocolate, with some adjustments, were now made to perform tasks that would have astounded their inventors. Motor repair shops, garages and a surprising variety of other firms were engaged in the production of war material.

Although the worst period of bombing was over for her, Goering did not neglect the city altogether. Between the Good Friday raid and the beginning of August 1941 the enemy attacked the Bristol defence area thirteen times and there were two medium-sized raids. In the first of these, 8 May, the attack lasted for two and a half hours and only some 100 high explosive bombs were dropped, but seventy-eight fires were started by the showers of incendiaries that descended upon the city. Buildings were destroyed or damaged in Ashton Gate and Clifton. In the centre of the city there was destruction in New Kingsley Road; the Infirmary, the Eye Hospital, the Merchant Venturers Alms Houses were damaged, while the Merchants Hall was struck again. The City Engineer and the Medical Officer of Health, together with their staffs, were driven from their offices. Nevertheless the city was cheered by the strength of the anti-aircraft barrage and by the destruction of an enemy plane which was brought down with its crew near Wrington.

In the succeeding days there were more warnings and a number of high explosive bombs were dropped, but these fell harmlessly in Leigh Woods, the nearby Avon, Easton-in-Gordano, Barrow Gurney and in open fields at Shirehampton. Between 13 and 25 May there were warnings but no enemy appeared. On the 26th two hostile planes flew over Bristol but were driven off before they could attack. On the 30th two horses and two heifers were killed at Winford, a bag which must have rejoiced the heart of Goering. Then on 31 May

came the second raid of the month. High explosive and incendiary bombs fell on the Somerset No. 1 division and upon Shirehampton, Clifton and Knowle. This raid resulted in the destruction of four houses and in the damage of 290 others.

There were more warnings on 1, 2 and 4 June. On the 5th eighteen bombs fell harmlessly between Charlton Lodge and Tyntesfield, in Somerset. The siren wailed on the 6th, 9th and 11th but no raid developed. On the 12th two parachute mines dropped near Victoria Park and damaged about 700 houses. Some conception of the power of these missiles may be formed from the fact that the crater of one of them was 75 feet long and 25 feet wide. Then, after a few more warnings, bombs fell again on the 15th, this time at Stoke Gifford and Frenchay. Two days later sixteen more bombs were dropped in the Nailsea area, causing one death and the destruction of two cottages. During the remainder of June there were five more alerts but no enemy attack occurred. In view of the contemptible results achieved, this sporadic raiding must have been an expensive luxury for the Germans. So far as the people of Bristol were concerned, though the loss of property was naturally the cause of regret and much inconvenience, these largely ineffectual enemy appearances kept the people on the *qui vive* and so served a useful purpose. On 1 July two more parachute mines fell on Winford but there was no serious damage. There were warnings on the 2nd, and on the 5th forty houses in Cromwell and Belvoir Roads were affected. Although the enemy was in the vicinity on eight other occasions that month there were no raids.

During August and September the same situation prevailed. A.R.P. Control was moved on the 11th of this month to Badminton Junior School, where more convenient and suitable accommodation existed and the first reserve was transferred from the University to the now vacant 55 Broadmead premises, while the University was retained as a second reserve. Throughout October there were constant alerts and on the 25th a land mine fell in the sea off Portishead. For the remainder of the year there were no more attacks though many warnings. Thus, even though the war news was very mixed and mostly bad, Bristol ended 1941 in a far more contented frame of mind than a year earlier.

## XIV

### THE INVASION SCARES

IN THE summer of 1941 the nation at large tended to be overconfident. It knew that the army was once more well equipped, that it was larger than it had been a year ago and that in the past twelve months the Home Guard had grown from an eager body of amateurs into an effective defensive force. The industries of the country had responded to the national necessity in a way that had surprised the world. The cost of the Battle of the Atlantic in men and ships was heavy but, nevertheless, millions of tons of goods of all kinds were being landed at the ports. Yet the situation was by no means as satisfactory as it appeared on the surface. Before Hitler entered upon his Russian adventure the possibility of an attempted German invasion of Great Britain was much discussed by the civilian and Service chiefs of the country. There were, in fact, three invasion scares during the war. The first was in 1940 after the fall of France, the second was in 1941, in the weeks immediately preceding and for some time after the attack on Russia, and the third in 1942 when the Germans had reached the Volga and it seemed possible that Stalin might soon be compelled to capitulate. Although at these times the possibility of German invasion was a paramount concern, the thought of such an incursion was continually present from 1940 until 1944.

Ever since the fall of France the Führer had never ceased to proclaim the invasion of Britain as one of his most cherished intentions. Thanks mainly to the gallantry of the R.A.F., the boastful threats of the previous summer had not materialized, but there was no reason for believing, in 1941, that the German war-lord had changed his mind. He knew, as everyone else knew, that if he was to win he must conquer Britain. Unquestionably England in 1941 was a far tougher nut to crack than England in 1940, yet it was by no means certain that if Germany attacked with all her strength she would be defeated.

Indeed, in May 1941, the British military leaders were so convinced of impending invasion that they would gladly have concentrated almost the whole strength of Great Britain on the defence of the island. If it were lost all would be lost. They believed that the Germans could hurl six fully armoured divisions, with 2400 tanks, into the assault. While, in their view, 2600 tanks of all kinds would be required to repel such an invasion, Great Britain could not then muster more than 1250. The General Staff considered that the beach defences were on the whole good, but they knew the defenders were thinly spread on the long coast line, one division for every forty-five miles. Moreover the army had less than half its proper resources in anti-tank guns and it was also short of anti-tank mines. General Dill hoped that by June Britain would be able to put the equivalent of three fully equipped armoured divisions into the field. Thus at best England must depend on about half as much armour as the Germans could bring against her.

The Battle of Crete had shown what a resolute enemy, indifferent to the sacrifice of life, could effect by aerial invasion. Although German losses were very high, yet a stream of carriers and gliders had landed their men and equipment. So it might be with Britain. Provided the Germans were determined, and there was no doubt of that, their chance of establishing a bridgehead on the island was good. The attack on Russia gave Britain a respite, but this might be short, for no one knew with certainty how long Russia could bear the strain that was put upon her. The drain on her manpower, though of no significance as yet, might, if continued, become serious. Only a few weeks had elapsed since Germany and Russia had apparently been close friends and they might become close friends again, or pretend to be so. Anything was possible with two such practised schemers, and Stalin was certainly not an over-enthusiastic ally. He was contemptuous about the amount of aid he was receiving, and was promised, from the already overburdened Great Britain. As soon as Russia was in the war he kept on insolently calling for the opening of a Second Front at once and in September, when Mr. Churchill had again explained the impossibility of such a move at that time, he demanded the dispatch of thirty British divisions to aid him either in the far north or to bear the brunt of the campaign in

the south. His Communist minions in Bristol and throughout the country now made a volte-face which must have been bewildering even to them. Instead of denouncing the imperialist warmongers they now extolled the noble cause and shrieked for a Second Front in order to save the great-hearted, generous, democratic U.S.S.R. from destruction. Although they threw themselves into war work with zest, they were still a nuisance and full of mischief. Always they were working for Russia. Thus, for example, on one occasion they produced a poster which was identical with one issued by the Ministry of Information save that it had printed across it in bold letters **OPEN THE SECOND FRONT NOW**. They placed these posters secretly on hoardings next to the authorized ones and so made it appear that the Ministry of Information was advocating the immediate opening of a Second Front which at that very moment the British Government was refusing to consider. It was, in fact, difficult to trust either the Communists or their master in the Kremlin.

While pondering the possibility of invasion those responsible for the defence of Great Britain recalled what had happened in France in 1940. Then practically the whole population in great sections of the country had fled in panic from their homes and rendered the roads impassable. They had impeded the working of the French military machine and had helped materially to bring France to her knees. Everyone was agreed that such a thing must not be allowed to happen in England. Therefore, while sorely needed tanks, military stores and aeroplanes were sent off by the dangerous northern route to the ungrateful Stalin, while the bombing of Germany was intensified and the war in the Near East was maintained, and while the battle of the Atlantic pursued its grim course, the fighting and civil defence forces of the country prepared for invasion.

Much thought was devoted to "crash evacuation," which in official jargon was the term used to describe the uncontrolled flight of the civilian population from their homes to some imagined place of safety elsewhere. In order to ensure that a sudden mass exodus from the city should not be allowed to get out of hand, the Bristol authorities held discussions with their colleagues in the neighbouring counties and plans were made. Special emergency cooking depots were established at Oldbury



Court, Fishponds; Temple Cloud and other places in the country. Fifty emergency food centres, partially or wholly independent of gas and electricity supplies, at which it was stated that 40,000 people could be provided with meals, were also set up in the city.

The lessons of the previous winter were now applied and Bristol also attempted to learn something from the experiences of Plymouth and other places. "Stay put," however, was still the official policy and it was assumed that whatever happened the bulk of the city's population would not move. The authorities, therefore, turned their attention once more to the problems of shelters and civil defence. When winter came Bristol had shelter space for 295,264 people. All this time the recruitment and training of shelter wardens continued and, although volunteers were hard to come by, a sound and efficient force was slowly created.

By the middle of 1941, 85,000 men were registered under the Civil Defence Duties (Compulsory Enrolment) Order, but still, as has been said before, there were more jobs to be done than there were people to do them. At the very time when the civil defence services should have been strengthened, men and women continued to leave them. In the July quarter alone, 467 wardens resigned and only 274 new recruits were enlisted. Among the full-time men and women who remained at their posts, moreover, there was considerable discontent, owing to the long hours and the variety of odd jobs thrown upon them, but by paying overtime rates and adjusting the hours of work the general efficiency of the service was improved. Both the civic authorities and the public dreaded the consequences of another winter of complete blackout. As it was now known that it would be possible to relieve the darkness of the streets to some extent without assisting the enemy, a widespread demand arose for a relaxation of the policy pursued hitherto. With the agreement of the fighting services, therefore, the main traffic routes were provided with a modified lighting system, which was of some use to those who were out at night, but was not sufficient to attract the attention of enemy planes. This work was not completed until 31 March 1942, but, small as the innovation was, it was received with general satisfaction. During the next three years street lighting ceased altogether during the summer

months and the "starlight" system, was continued in the winters till 1 October 1944 when stronger lighting, known as "moon-glow," was permitted.

Among many other lessons that Bristol learned from her experiences in the winter of 1940-41 was the need to improve her emergency water supply. Therefore the work of searching for additional springs and wells, which had begun as far back as 1939, was now completed. Arrangements were made for adequate chlorination so that in an emergency no time would be lost in bringing them into use. As for the static water supply, it was reported in October that before this could be considered satisfactory the expenditure of another £5000 would be necessary.

After the outbreak of war it was realized that the normal restaurant facilities of the city were insufficient to meet the increased demand. The adult population of Bristol was now greatly swollen, more people were away from home during the day and though some factories and business houses provided canteens for their workpeople there were still many who found it hard to obtain meals in the rush hour. A civic catering officer was therefore appointed; in July 1941 the first British Restaurant was opened in the unfinished Council House on College Green, and before the war ended Bristol had thirteen of these excellent eating places.

A more important problem was how the city was to be governed when the enemy was established in the neighbourhood, or actually in possession of a part of it. To meet such a possible contingency it was felt that the powers of the Emergency Committee must now be enlarged to enable it to deal with any crisis that might occur, without the delays inseparable from customary procedure. As the city now knew what war meant, the possible transfer of so much authority to one small committee was accepted without demur, whereas in 1939 the mere announcement that the Emergency Committee was to be set up had produced an outcry that popular government was in danger.

Even when the Emergency Committee was thus strengthened, it was still felt that the situation was not wholly satisfactory. Therefore, in July, it was decided to set up a Defence Committee which would assume control of the city's affairs when

the enemy was actually at its gates. This new body consisted of the Emergency Committee, which was still to be the executive authority, together with the heads of all the main departments, the Chief Constable, representatives of the fighting services, and other officials, including an Information Officer, who was now appointed. So long as Bristol could still be administered as a single unit the Defence Committee was to be in control, but if a portion of the city was cut off it would still be necessary to ensure that the vital services were carried on. The city was therefore divided into five sections, including the central portion, now to be known as the "Keep," over which the Defence Committee was to preside to the bitter end. In each of the remaining four a sub-defence committee was established which contained representatives of the various heads of departments and of other officials who sat on the main committee, together with two city councillors, one of whom was to act as chairman and the other as his deputy. For the remainder of the summer and autumn the principal officers were busily engaged in the appointment of their representatives on the various sub-committees and in the creation of divisional organizations, which could function as self-contained units fully integrated with the sub-divisional mechanism. As there was some difference of opinion about the boundaries of the new divisions it was finally decided to base the defence committee system on the existing A.R.P. structure.

While the Defence Committees were being set up the garrison commander overhauled his arrangements, tightened up his liaison with the Home Guard and distributed his anti-aircraft batteries to the best advantage. He estimated that he would require the services of some 1500 civilian workers. He would look to the Defence Committee to deal with fires, to be responsible for the clearance of roads, to assist the police in the prevention of Fifth Column and sabotage activities, to maintain the city's food supply and to provide medical services. The civic authorities would also be expected to help with the immobilization of vehicles not considered essential and later, when the order came, with the destruction of those that remained.

The Defence Committee was also to maintain contacts with similar bodies in the neighbouring counties and to assist them

if required. In expectation of attack a list of petrol stations was drawn up, some of which were now scheduled for use in invasion, and arrangements were made for the destruction of all petrol supplies if the enemy succeeded in establishing himself in the city. Every foot of territory was to be contested and it was intended that nothing which could be of use to the invader should be left intact. As it was desirable that, if the need arose, all relevant facts should be spread as rapidly and as widely as possible, the chief officials were given full information so that they could pass it on to their staffs and to the general public.

## XV

### THE WAR RECEDES FROM BRISTOL

ON NEW Year's Day, 1942, Great Britain had some reason for satisfaction but much more for depression. The United States was now in the war and this might be a guarantee of victory. The Libyan campaign was going well, but, though for the moment in retreat, Rommel's forces were still intact and might soon be able to resume the offensive. The menace to the country's ocean lifeline was slowly being mastered and great argosies continued, though with heavy losses, to reach British ports or to sail from them for all parts of the world. In the Far East, however, the picture was one of unrelieved gloom. The Japanese, who had struck their treacherous blow after years of careful preparation, now swept over south-east Asia and the adjacent islands like a tidal wave. Within a few days after the attack on Pearl Harbour they effected landings in Malaya and Thailand while their air force was being massed in Indo-China for an assault on Singapore. In the meantime the two great British capital ships, *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*, having arrived at Singapore on 2 December, were both sunk on the 10th. These lightning strokes of a treacherous foe thus crippled the naval power of the United States and Great Britain in the Western Pacific and Indian oceans. Hong Kong fell on Christmas Day, and in the early months of the new year Japan enjoyed an uninterrupted series of triumphs. The British were driven out of Malaya, and Singapore fell in mid-February; Thailand was overrun; the greater part of Burma was conquered; the Dutch East Indies were seized, and, after a gallant defence, the American forces in the Philippines were compelled to surrender. Soon the swollen empire of the Japanese extended from the Aleutians to the Solomons, from the Andamans to New Guinea. They were knocking at the gates of India; they were masters of the western Pacific and they were threatening Australia.

While these heavy calamities followed each other in appalling

succession, the fortune of war turned against Great Britain in Libya. Benghazi fell on 29 January. For several months after that little was achieved by either side, but at last Rommel was ready to strike again. Tobruk and Bardia fell on 21 June, Rommel crossed the Egyptian frontier three days later and by the end of July the two armies had fought themselves to a standstill. Finally, the British forces fell back on El Alamein. There the weakened British army, together with such reinforcements as were immediately available, contrived to arrest the enemy's advance while succour was rushed out to it by the long route round the Cape.

Far away in Russia, during the winter of 1941-42, some ground was regained from the Germans. But when spring came, the advance was resumed and, before the summer was over, the enemy was in the Crimea, he had reached the foothills of the Caucasus and was on the banks of the Volga. As winter descended once more the Germans were held, this time at Stalingrad.

In Bristol the first part of the year 1942 was not a happy time. The country had now been at war for over two years and still there was no prospect of peace. The struggle might go on, so some people felt, until all vestiges of civilization were destroyed. It was natural that at such a time the fault-finder should be well to the fore, and certainly there was a good deal of unreasonable criticism of the news services. "Trust the people" had been the cry of the year before: "Do not conceal the truth from us, we can take it." But now the truth was told, and it was unpleasant, the B.B.C. and the Press were attacked for their gloom. "Make more of the gallantry of our men and less of our defeats." "Dress up the stories a bit so as to emphasize individual deeds of gallantry." In fact, it was now demanded that those responsible for the dissemination of news should do the very things that a year before they had been so bitterly criticized for attempting to do. But nothing could have given complete satisfaction at this time except the promise of victory. Such a promise, however, was withheld until the autumn of this momentous year.

The authorities were worried by the spread of a spirit of apathy. Rumours were rife about the ineptitude of those responsible for the direction of industry. Although most of these

stories were pure fabrications, their effect was none the less undesirable. The men and women in the civil defence services were also becoming bored; they needed the tonic of enemy attack to keep them interested. There was, in fact, some justification for this spirit of frustration. In addition to the triumphs of the enemy, which were sufficiently striking without any special elaboration, there were some sections of the London Press that appeared to abuse their function by indulging in unpleasant insinuations and carping attacks, the only result of which was to lessen the people's faith in their leaders. For the moment, moreover, the Government's technique was not impeccable and those who urged that the Prime Minister's attitude should be emphasized were undoubtedly right. If Britons grasped that England was still in the front line, it was believed that much of their restlessness would disappear; they would accept reductions in petrol, the loss of white bread, and restrictions on travel, without complaint.

The enemy did not allow Bristol to forget that he still had power to strike, but for the first few weeks of the new year the skies above the city were free of enemy planes. There were no air raid warnings in January, only one in February and two in March. On five successive days in early April there were warnings and on the 17th there was a slight attack. Four high-explosive bombs were dropped on Avonmouth, two of which fell in the mud, one demolished a building near the old passenger station and the other struck the new jetty in course of construction north of the north pier. There were several more alerts during the next week and a raid on the 25th caused some damage at Avonmouth, Bedminster and St. George, but the chief sufferer was the Knowle Division. Some 200 incendiary bombs and fifty high explosives were dropped there; 100 houses were destroyed and 1300 others were damaged. Many high explosives also fell in open spaces on the outskirts of the city.

Bath, however, was the enemy's main target that night and on the following one. As that city had no previous experience of raids and was weakly defended the devastation was considerable and the confusion very great. For several days after these visitations, men and women from the Bristol civil defence services assisted the stricken city.

On 28 and 29 June, Weston-super-Mare was attacked, but

only one bomb fell on Bristol. On this occasion, as two months before, she succoured her neighbour and when Exeter was the victim the same ready aid was forthcoming.

There were alerts from time to time during July. On 5 August some eighty houses at Brislington were damaged by four high explosives, and two were demolished. Five days later a number of unlit flares and unexploded bombs fell at some distance to the east of Staple Hill station. On 28 August a fighter bomber, flying at over 20,000 feet over the city, dropped a bomb which fell at 9.20 a.m. in Broad Weir. Three buses were set on fire and twenty people were burnt to death. Much property was also destroyed. This tragic incident aroused a storm of bitter and almost hysterical protest. All that the man in the street knew was that an enemy plane appeared in the sky above Bristol on a summer morning, a bomb was dropped, which caused a lamentable loss of life, several minutes before the siren sounded. Nevertheless, there was much in the Regional Commissioner's rejoinder that, even if the warning had been given in time, the result would still have been the same, since people had become so careless about alerts. After all, Bristol was still in the war and, no matter what precautions were taken, isolated, surprise attacks such as this were to be expected. There were more warnings in the closing months of the year, but there were no more attacks.

In 1942 the transport system showed unmistakable signs of the ravages of war. Maintenance work lagged behind requirements, passenger trains were fewer, buses were becoming scarce on many routes and bus drivers and conductors were hard to find. At the same time the strain put upon this industry was increasing month by month. Vast quantities of war material had to be moved, service men and women and millions of factory workers were using the buses and trains each day. The Government, therefore, exhorted private citizens to travel as little as possible.

Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that if people were to maintain their efficiency they must have relaxation of some kind. Even if the ordinary pre-war means of transport had been available where were they to go when country places were filled with evacuees and many seaside resorts were closed to the public? It was in these conditions that the plan of providing



holidays at home was conceived. This idea was not wholly new. In the previous year the people of Bristol had been cheered from time to time by the appearance of various military bands. Of these, perhaps the most popular, and certainly the one which did most for Bristol, was the Band of the 30th Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. During 1941 it was constantly in demand and whenever it was possible for it to help, which was often, it did so with alacrity. The Calgary Highlanders came to the city in August, and Bristol did her utmost to convince herself that she liked pipe music. Great crowds gathered to listen to the pipers at Eastville Park, on the Downs and wherever they performed. It was their handsome appearance and the dash of colour which they provided, as much as their music, that was admired. The Band of the R.A.S.C. gave two excellent concerts in the early summer, while that of the Wiltshire Regiment visited Bristol in the autumn. Some local firms also had their own bands and whenever the men could snatch an hour or so from war work or civil defence they entertained their fellow-citizens.

In 1942 the amusement of the people was taken up by the city fathers with great vigour. This important work was entrusted to an *ad hoc* committee which continued its labours for the remaining summers of the war and for some time after. It had often been said in the past that Englishmen had long since lost their capacity for entertaining themselves, but now it was shown that this view was entirely false and that when thrown on their own resources ordinary men and women were not only versatile but ingenious. It is impossible here to do more than refer in a general way to these wartime holiday activities. There is, for example, a certain spot on the Downs admirably suited for out-of-doors dramatics, which one amateur society chose as its particular theatre. On many a week-day evening and Saturday afternoon in the bright summer weather delighted audiences, sprawling on the grass, were enthralled by the performances of these amateur actors who had few properties and little but their own enthusiasm and the delightful setting of their play to aid them. If Shakespeare could have returned from Elysium to view *Twelfth Night*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *All's Well that Ends Well* produced in these rustic surroundings he would have been

gratified. Besides plays, there were exhibitions of many kinds, concerts, and circuses. For the serious-minded there were lectures in the Museum Lecture Theatre and elsewhere, and exhibitions in the Art Gallery and the Central Library. There were carnivals in many of the city's parks; there was dancing in the lunch hour on College Green, and dancing in the evening in a great marquee on the Downs. Concert parties, entertainers of many sorts, toured from parish hall to parish hall, and Bristol was gay. Indeed, as one visitor declared, the old city seemed almost to be Continental. Her attractions were so considerable, in fact, that people from the country at weekends poured in to join in the fun and thus helped to intensify the very problems which the scheme had been promoted to solve.

Altogether, during the summers of 1942-45, shows were held in thirty different city parks; there were 358 band concerts attended by over 70,000 people; the dance music melody vans attracted 694,000 and in all there were 2944 events attended by 2,211,593 people. So, during these wartime summers, the city recaptured the spirit of the past, for these simple players, these amateur artists, this pleasant cheerfulness and gaiety were in the great tradition of "merrie England." When at length all was over, when the properties were put away and the dancing was done, a substantial balance remained, which, in the view of a great commercial city such as Bristol, added the last touch to the unqualified success of her holidays at home.

The local repertory company at the Little Theatre, apart from the first two weeks of the war when all communal entertainment was peremptorily banned and a few months during the bombing fury of the 1940-41 winter (when incidentally the company went on an Ensa tour), continued its gallant and unruffled course. While Ronald Russell served in the Special Constabulary, production was directed by his wife, Peggy Ann Wood; and the remarkable series of 250 plays presented by the Rapier Players in the face of all sorts of difficulties contributed greatly to the cheer and refreshment of Bristolians during the long years of war.

While these entertainments were going on Bristol learned with dismay of the threat to her old Theatre. From that night in 1766 when it had opened its doors for the first time, and a prologue specially written for the occasion by David Garrick

was pronounced, the Theatre Royal continued to be a place of entertainment down to the outbreak of the war in 1939. In the course of that long period it had been visited by many of the most famous of English actors and actresses—Barry Sullivan, the Keans, Mrs. Siddons, Ellen Terry and many more. David Garrick considered this theatre, with its semi-circular auditorium, to be “the most complete of its dimensions in Europe.” Early in 1942 it was rumoured that this historic building would probably be turned into a warehouse unless it could be purchased. The price demanded was £10,000. Everyone was agreed that the oldest theatre with a continuous existence in the kingdom should not be allowed to disappear in ignominy for the want of so small a sum. A public appeal, however, made in that year of many appeals, depressing news and general disillusionment, produced a bare fifth of the required amount. So the fate of the Theatre Royal seemed to be sealed. At length four patriotic citizens guaranteed the remaining £8,000 and in due course the building was leased by C.E.M.A., now the Arts Council, for twenty-one years. After long overdue renovations had been carried out the old Theatre entered upon a new and brilliant period of its history. In the early years of the present century it had sunk very low, but now once more good plays were produced and good actors trod its boards. In the post-war period the Bristol Old Vic Company has added to its illustrious story.

While Bristol thus succeeded in preserving her Theatre Royal and while she went on planning the splendid city that was to rise from the ruins of the old, the work of spoliation continued. This time it was done not by Germans but by the English themselves. The war industries were crying out for more and more iron, and so during this year ornamental railings and gates, some of them of exquisite eighteenth-century workmanship, disappeared, amid a mingled chorus of jubilation and execration.

At last, in the autumn of 1942, the war definitely turned in the Allies favour. In November American and British troops landed on the Moroccan and Algerian coasts. Algiers fell on 8 November, Oran two days later and before the end of the month French resistance in West Africa, Morocco and Algiers was at an end. By 28 November the Allied forces were within

twelve miles of Tunis, but there the advance was held by the now powerful German forces that Hitler had rushed to this danger point. Then, after a period of recuperation and reorganization, the forward movement was resumed. Meanwhile, after months of feverish preparation, the rearmed and greatly strengthened Eighth Army struck at El Alamein on 23 October and opened one of the most brilliant campaigns in British military history.

## XVI

### NEW PROBLEMS ARISE

EARLY in 1942 questions of discipline in the civil defence services attracted the attention of the Emergency Committee. Some men and women were spreading their slack habits and general indifference among their colleagues, but, when they were dismissed, they complained to their city councillors. These in turn raised the question of such dismissals officially, and the civil defence officers found themselves in danger of being reprimanded for carrying out what they conceived to be their duty. Finally, it was agreed that such disgruntled persons should have the right of appeal to a higher authority.

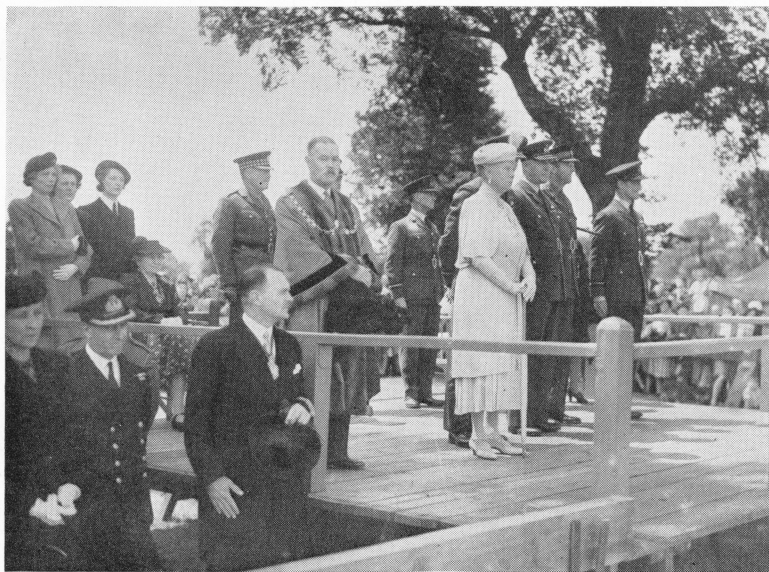
A more serious problem at this time was that of the relation of the civil defence services to the Home Guard. By now not a few corporation officials had joined the latter body, and numbers of civil defence workers wished to follow their example, but if this seepage continued the organization might be undermined. So, after careful deliberation, the order was issued that men in the civil defence services should not in the future be permitted to join the Home Guard. This, however, did not solve the problem. According to the Zone Commander and his officers, there were men still to be found who were taking no part in the defence of their city. This being so, it was difficult to order the Home Guard out on fireguard duty each night. It was arranged, therefore, that the men should stand by at headquarters ready to assist if required and provided, of course, that they were not otherwise engaged on their proper duties.

Day by day the call of industry and the fighting services was becoming more insistent and a steady, though not large, trickle of men and women continued to flow out of civil defence into other occupations now considered more essential. In 1942 the Home Guard took over the anti-aircraft defence of the city. That such a thing could have been done is a testimony to the magnificent work of the past two years. The new duties

## ROYAL ENCOURAGEMENT



King George VI meets A.R.P. workers, in December 1940. Behind the King is Sir Hugh Elles, Regional Commissioner.



Queen Mary the Queen Mother lived at Badminton, and was frequently in Bristol. This was an A.T.C. parade—6 July 1942. The Lord Mayor (Alderman E. T. Cozens), the Duke of Beaufort and the Sheriff (Mr. Harold Hosegood) were in attendance.

## AMERICANS IN BRISTOL



Cricket on the Close at Clifton College . . . with a Y.M.C.A. canvas car and American troops looking on.



The Americans, whether officers or G.I.s, made many friends, not least with the children—16 February 1943.

imposed meant greater calls upon the men's time and thus rendered it more than ever difficult for them to concern themselves with fire fighting and other forms of civil defence.

If the Home Guard was to do all the work that was now thrown upon it, more recruits would be required. A meeting of employers, employees, trade union officials, representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Home Guard officers was therefore held at the Council House on 18 November 1942, with the Lord Mayor in the chair. The spokesmen of labour pointed out that unless the need was put clearly to the men the response would probably be poor. As some doubt was felt about the capacity of the recruits to take on this work, it was explained that the new anti-aircraft gun was both more efficient and easier to handle than the old one. Conditions in the Home Guard would be good and provided there was no attack the men on duty could count on a good night's rest. The trade union representatives declared that they were ready to support the scheme, provided the employers would co-operate, and it was unanimously resolved:

That this meeting of representatives of Bristol employers and employees being assured of the need for additional recruits for the Home Guard to ensure that all available anti-aircraft defences of the city shall be adequately manned, pledges its support for the measures to be adopted to increase the strength of the anti-aircraft units; and that each representative shall use his best endeavour to facilitate the work of the Ministry of Labour and National Service in this direction.

While these difficulties were being dealt with, overlapping was eliminated in the civil defence services and all possible economies were made in order that more work could be performed by a force whose personnel was constantly changing, and whose size might be reduced. In order that the new and more efficient enemy incendiary bomb could be successfully tackled, more static water-tanks were constructed. The training of the Fire Guard was intensified. The number of fire huts in which instruction could be given was increased to thirty and the erection of another fifty was planned. By the middle of the summer, 403 trained instructors were ready for their work. In order that key people should have exact information concerning



all services, which they could pass on to enquirers, more particularly after raids, a new information handbook, the *Pocket Advice Bureau*, was issued by the Emergency Committee with the approval of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Information.

Later in the year the preparation of war books was put in hand. Each of these productions was intended to give an exact description of the working of the particular service with which it was concerned. The intention was that if the chief officer and his staff were put out of action by the enemy the service might still be carried on by reference to the war book, of which there were to be three copies, each kept in a different place.

During the winter and spring of 1942-43 the defence committees, which had been set up in the previous year, were consolidated and strengthened. As their personnel was continually fluctuating this task was by no means easy. In order to test the mechanism and to make sure that both the defence committee and its divisional sub-committees knew their business, a series of exercises was arranged. At first these were confined to particular divisions of the city. Later, defence exercises were held for the whole of Bristol. It was the practice on these occasions to entrust the attack to the field army and the defence to the garrison and Home Guard, with all the civil defence services fully extended. Every problem that the military and civil defence chiefs could imagine was suggested so that weaknesses in co-ordination, and defects in organization, might be discovered. Each service was given specific problems to solve and everyone had to remain at his post throughout the whole period. The first large exercise took place on 1 and 2 November 1942. It was intended to test the mechanism of the main defence committee and the sub-defence committee of Bristol south. On 7 and 8 March 1943, a second exercise was held, this time for the main defence committee and Bristol East division.

Exercise Thunder, the largest of the series, took place from 15 to 17 May 1943. This was the first of its kind to be held in the country and it was intended that in so far as it was possible Bristol should be confronted with invasion conditions. The entire population of the city was to participate and had, therefore, to be instructed in its duties. Indeed, it was high time that something of the kind should be done as, during the previous

months, there had been a growing volume of dissatisfaction over the alleged inadequacy of preparations against invasion. As so often happens, people tended to think that because they themselves did not know what was going on nothing was being done. Now, in the late spring of 1943, on all sides men were asking what was to be the duty of the civilian when it came to actual fighting. Was he expected to stand idly by or should he join in the battle? If there was to be street fighting, in which all citizens would be expected to share, they should be taught more about the nature and use of weapons and given some instruction in the art of defence and attack. All were agreed that when the time came the defenders must be aggressive. The obvious answer to active men who asked such questions and who were not engaged upon civil defence, was to join the Home Guard which, with the Regular Army, would bear the brunt of the fighting. It was pointed out to the public that during the period of invasion there would be much other work to be done in addition to fighting and that civilians might be of more service to their country if they carried out such tasks than if they took up arms. Still, it was recognized that every man had the right to defend his own home as best he could. Because this was so, and since the more skill he had the better, the demand for instruction by the man in the street was reasonable.

Here again there was some slight difference of opinion between the civic and military authorities on the one hand and the police on the other. If the civilians were to be trained in the use of arms, it was suggested that the civil defence organization might be entrusted with this work, but the police considered that this would be illegal. To many this seemed to be carrying form to a ridiculous length. To talk of things being legal or otherwise at a time when street fighting was in progress was nonsense. So some training was provided, and the Emergency Committee issued bulletins to inform the public about the nature of the exercise and about what each man and woman would be expected to do. For two days Bristol pretended to be a beleaguered city, and hundreds of thousands of citizens diligently played their parts, not without mirth.

Each exercise was followed by a meeting of all the officials concerned at which the umpire made practical criticisms and suggestions, gave commendation where it was deserved and did

not hesitate to administer censure. One of the most valuable lessons so learned was that the liaison between the civil defence services and the military was still defective. Special officers were therefore appointed who knew something of both services and were to bridge the gap between them at battalion level. Too much emphasis was laid on the purely military side at first with the result that the civil defence services were not given an adequate trial. It also became clear that, in spite of all that had been so far done, there was much obscurity about the respective spheres of sub-defence committees and the main body. Both the Regional Commissioner and the Sub-Area Commander believed that alterations were necessary in the operational area surrounding Bristol and also in the boundaries of the sections of the city placed under different sub-defence committees. Some of the more ardent militarists would gladly have merged the civil defence services and the Home Guard, but there was no desire on the part of the civic leaders that such a change should be carried through and the idea was soon forgotten.

More important than any of these conclusions, however, was the view of the Garrison Commander and the Zone Commander of the Home Guard that the defence committee organization was far too complicated. Thus, in Exercise Thunder, it was assumed that the telephone system of the city had been put out of action, with the result that the task laid upon the messenger service proved far too heavy. The heroic efforts of the youthful members of that service were not sufficient to maintain efficient and rapid contact between the Home Guard and the civil defence chiefs as well as between them and the various sub-defence committees. But if these latter bodies were to discharge the duty for which they had been created this was essential. In order to maintain communications at such a standard it would be necessary to increase the messenger service to four times its original size. Moreover, there was probably at the back of the minds of the military commanders the conviction, not expressed, that in the face of the enemy their work would be seriously impeded by the existence of so many civilian bodies possessing wide, though not very clearly defined, powers. So it was decided to scrap the sub-defence committees. Councillors and others who had built up the divisional machines were thanked for their services and asked to hold themselves in

readiness for any serious emergency that might arise. Sub-controllers were appointed to co-ordinate the work of civil defence and in the remote event of a breakdown of communications with the centre to co-operate directly with the military.

It was now believed that it was improbable that Bristol would ever be attacked bit by bit as had been formerly presumed. The city might be divided along the line of the river, but no other sub-division was likely. As this was so, the creation of a number of potentially independent sub-defence committees was clearly both unnecessary and undesirable. The experiment of the defence committees taught the general public a great deal. The citizens were given a much clearer conception of what invasion might mean. They now recognized the wisdom of the instruction to "Stay put," at which previously some had been inclined to sneer. Not a few of them, moreover, had acquired some knowledge of self-defence and so, though the sub-divisional system failed to achieve the purpose for which it was set up, it did, in these and various other ways, help to strengthen the spirit of confidence.

## XVII

### THE COMING OF THE AMERICANS

IN PREVIOUS chapters of this book repeated reference has been made to the aid which was received from the United States. Bristols large and small scattered over the Union showed their sympathy and goodwill in a variety of ways. Food, clothing, medical stores, mobile canteens and kitchens, ambulances and sums of money, were showered by the generous people of the United States upon this old city, whose fortunes in the past had been so closely linked with those of their own country. Wendell Wilkie and other distinguished Americans visited Bristol and spoke words of praise and encouragement to its hard-pressed people. Films which told the story of Bristol's civil defence services were sent across the ocean to circulate through the innumerable cinemas of the United States and Canada. American journalists were constantly arriving to view the havoc wrought by the enemy, and the fame of Bristol was spread far and wide throughout their vast country.

At the beginning of the war many Bristol children found homes among the hospitable people of the United States. Later, by means of the Bellows scheme, already described, and others of a like nature, Americans strove to help and care for children whose parents had lost their lives in the air raids. In these and in other ways, too numerous to mention, they had befriended the people of Bristol and of Britain. Many Bristolians who had lived through a night of terror experienced something more than mere physical relief when in the bleak morning they were warmed and cheered by the clothing and food which had been sent, by unknown well-wishers, across thousands of miles of enemy-infested ocean. The knowledge that this volume of goodwill toward them existed caused an uplifting of the spirit, whose value it is impossible to measure. The fireside chats of President Roosevelt were eagerly listened to by hundreds of thousands, perhaps by millions, of British people and there is no

doubt that his strong confident voice brought hope into many a British home.

Americans, however, were not content merely with sending their good wishes and their material aid. They took back to their own country tangible evidence of the experiences Bristol was enduring. Bits of shrapnel, picked up on the city streets, were sold in the United States and the money so raised was forwarded to the Lord Mayor's War Services Council. A quantity of rubble from demolished Bristol buildings was used in the construction of the Manhattan section of East River Drive, New York. On 9 June 1942 a bronze plaque, presented by the English Speaking Union of the United States, was unveiled on the foot-bridge, which bears the following lines:

### BRISTOL BASIN

BENEATH THIS EAST RIVER DRIVE OF THE CITY  
OF NEW YORK LIE STONES, BRICKS AND RUBBLE  
FROM THE BOMBED CITY OF BRISTOL IN ENGLAND . . .  
BROUGHT HERE IN BALLAST FROM OVERSEAS, THESE  
FRAGMENTS THAT ONCE WERE HOMES SHALL  
TESTIFY WHILE MEN LOVE FREEDOM TO THE  
RESOLUTION AND FORTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE OF  
BRITAIN. THEY SAW THEIR HOMES STRUCK DOWN  
WITHOUT WARNING. . . . IT WAS NOT THEIR HOMES  
BUT THEIR VALOR THAT KEPT THEM FREE. . . .

And broad-based under all  
Is planted England's oaken-hearted mood,  
As rich in fortitude  
As e'er went worldward from the island-wall.

Even the entry of their country into the war did not deter Americans from their generous habit of sending material aid to the war-shattered cities of Britain. Thus, in February 1942, the Lord Mayor received from Cary Grant, the Bristol-born American film star, a cheque for the sum of five thousand dollars. In the same month it was reported in Bristol that American women were still knitting for Britain, even though their own sons were now in need of comforts. In July, the President of the British War Relief Society, Mr. Winthrop

W. Aldrich, visited Bristol. "The plans now well under way," he said, "will ensure a continuance of the work we have been doing. The United States war relief effort for its Allies will be on a very definite and continuous basis." This was a promise that Americans both during the war and since have generously fulfilled.

With the memory of all this kindness fresh in their minds it was natural that Bristolians should resolve that, if American soldiers ever arrived in their midst, they should receive a welcome which, in part at least, would repay Bristol's debt to the United States. From the Lord Mayor downward every citizen was determined that the Americans should be made to feel at home. After two-and-a-half years of war, however, the city realized that her performance must inevitably fall far short of her wishes.

Early in 1942 a Rendezvous for British Commonwealth and American troops was opened at the premises of the Royal Empire Society in Whiteladies Road. For the remainder of the war, the large ground-floor salon of that building was given over to this work. Americans, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, Indians and Colonials of all kinds took full advantage of the amenities thus provided. It was a quiet place where men could write their letters in peace and enjoy an hour or so of pleasant relaxation amid comfortable surroundings. At the Rendezvous was kept a register of addresses of families in Bristol that were ready to extend a welcome to the strangers. These offers of hospitality varied from a weekend or longer down to a fireside chat and a cup of coffee in the evening. Young university men were put in touch with those of their own kind; lawyers were introduced to lawyers, architects to architects and so on. This grouping was of course not rigidly insisted upon, for the men were at liberty to choose for themselves the people they wished to meet. Thus in an unspectacular way the Overseas Rendezvous more than justified the hopes of those responsible for its establishment.

Many clubs in the city were thrown open to overseas visitors who might wish to make use of them. The Bristol Savages, for example, made many hundreds of Dominion, American and other Allied soldiers welcome. If, as sometimes happened, an artist arrived, he was invited to join in the Wednesday night

sketching competitions. For many men those unique meetings of the Savages will always remain their most abiding memory of Bristol and, indeed, of England. There they found good cheer, lively conversation, pleasant badinage and excellent entertainment. "Drink down all unkindness" is inscribed on the beer mugs of the Savages and this both Englishmen and visitors from overseas continued to do with gusto throughout the war.

In July 1942, after a great deal of unofficial preparation had taken place, a representative meeting of citizens, under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor, Alderman E. T. Cozens, was held in the Council House. A committee was appointed with the general instruction that it should assist Americans in Bristol, and promote Anglo-American understanding. As, in addition to the hospitality offered by the various clubs of the city, the Americans would want clubs of their own, one of the committee's first tasks was to search out suitable premises. But the Americans themselves solved the problem. A club for coloured American servicemen was opened in the then vacant building of the Clergy Daughters School in Great George Street. The hospitality accorded to British visitors by the American negroes was lavish. These coloured Americans were exceedingly proud of their citizenship and of the superiority of the United States to all other countries.

The Lyndale Hotel was transformed into a club for white Americans. Here again there was abundant hospitality for the Bristolians who came to meet the young soldiers and there was a constant interchange of opinions and ideas. Later, when these premises became too small, the American Red Cross Club moved to the Royal West of England Academy in Queen's Road. In addition to the American staff, this club was served by some 200 volunteers, mainly Bristol ladies. Now, instead of art students in beards, sandals and rainbow attire, stalwart G.I.s dominated the scene.

Clifton College played many parts in the war. Down to the autumn of 1940 school life went on as usual except for the wailing of the siren. When heavy raiding began, however, it was decided that the boys should be moved to a safer place. The transfer was carried through during the Christmas vacation and the school was opened on 12 February 1941 at Bude.



The army took over the empty buildings where a training school was established. After that the College was occupied by the R.A.S.C. Officer Cadet Training Unit for a while, and at length, in 1942, the Americans entered into occupation. Strange things began to happen to Clifton. An elaborate telephone system was installed which would have delighted the boys if they could have returned. Baseball, with all its vociferous accompaniment of yells and counter yells, gesticulations and waving, was played on the outfield, but not on the sacred cricket pitch, and it was seldom that it could be said there was "a breathless hush in the Close tonight." It must be confessed that the Americans in turn were equally bewildered by the tranquillity and sabbatarian calm of an English game of cricket. Gum was openly chewed in places where the most audacious schoolboy would have hesitated to suck a surreptitious bullseye. Classrooms that had once reverberated to the stately rhythms of Virgil and Homer now re-echoed to broad middle-west and drawing deep south.

An American camp was established in Bedminster to guard mountains of foodstuffs and other stores. Houses in Stoke Bishop and its neighbourhood became the homes of high-ranking American officers. Negroes were brought to Avonmouth to learn the business of the docker before they proceeded to North Africa. American soldiers were billeted in Shirehampton, Westbury-on-Trym, Henleaze and elsewhere in the city. By 1944 great American hospitals had been established at Tortworth, Frenchay, and Tyntesfield. Americans crowded the public houses of the city, its cinemas and restaurants; they played games on the Downs or wherever they could find a convenient empty space. The city baths were thrown open to them; they attended Bristol churches on Sundays and made many friends; they went to dances and other entertainments and gave parties such as Bristol had not seen since the first months of the war. In 1943, when large numbers of American merchant sailors arrived, a special club was opened for these men in Park Street, and this in its turn became another centre of American hospitality.

The newcomers were eager to learn all they could about the historic surroundings in which they now found themselves. To meet their needs a corps of some sixteen guides was organized.

Mr. W. Edwards, so well known to successive generations of schoolboys through his *Notes on British History* and other books, was foremost in this work and no better or more understanding guide could have been found. His knowledge of the subject was considerable and he had an apparently inexhaustible store of anecdotes to adorn his tale. The visitors were introduced to Christmas Steps, St. John's Gate, St. Mary Redcliffe and other city churches, King Street, the *Llandoger Trow*, the Georgian House and the Red Lodge. Their guides did not fail to point out to them the various monuments that commemorate Bristol's long and close connection with the New World. The Dean was always ready to conduct parties of Americans over the Cathedral and, thanks to him, they returned from these visits with a heightened appreciation for the medieval craftsmen who had built the Norman Chapter House and had left the unmistakable mark of their genius on the cloisters and in the exquisite artistry of the choir. These eager learners thus acquired a love and veneration for the old city more conscious and discerning than that of many of her native inhabitants who so often take her for granted. Later on in the war the British Council took over some of this work and a guide book was prepared for the use of the Americans.

As it came round each year Independence Day was duly honoured. Thus on 4 July 1942 the Lord Mayor in the presence of British, Canadian and American soldiers, together with many citizens, placed a wreath on the memorial to Colonel Henry Washington. It is true that this gentleman was not a direct ancestor of the father of the Republic and that he lived almost a century before the great man was born. But a ceremony having as its centrepiece a tablet to the memory of a Cavalier colonel who bore the illustrious name was sufficient for the purpose.

On Thanksgiving Day 1942 the Cathedral was handed over to the Americans for a special service conducted by their own chaplains. Afterwards, in the nearby British Restaurant, the Lord Mayor entertained the whole congregation. There was High Mass at the Pro-Cathedral; services were held in various churches and chapels throughout the city; there were lunches and dinners. About a fortnight later a great meeting took place in the Colston Hall to commemorate the entry of the United

States into the war. Addresses were delivered by British and American speakers to a great audience of American servicemen, members of the British fighting services and of Bristol's civil defence. Americans themselves, however, in their own special way, did more than a dozen of such meetings to promote amity between their country and Great Britain.

By 1942 Christmas had been robbed of many of its traditional delights. Rationing was strict, food was hard to come by and tended to be dull. The Americans were well aware of these things and were in fact inclined to exaggerate them. Before their arrival they had been carefully schooled about their behaviour in England and one of the points that had been impressed upon them most was the shortage of food. In some instances they had been warned so much about what they should not do that a few of them at first were unduly timid about social contacts, lest they should unwittingly infringe some convention of which they were ignorant. In fact, the number of these conventions, if they existed at all, was very small and the English larder, though not overstocked, was far from being denuded. Moreover, the Christmas spirit was still strong and the average citizen was anxious to give the strangers as warm a welcome as lay in his power.

The Americans were quite incorrigible in their generosity, however, and they were immovable in their conviction that English rations were scarcely sufficient to maintain life. So, when they were invited to evening parties, it became customary for them to turn up with all manner of good things which they proceeded to press upon their reluctant hosts, who soon found themselves transformed, in their own homes, into guests. It is not suggested here that the Americans were either arrogant or ill-mannered in the way in which they did this, for that would be wide of the truth. They were tactful and sometimes almost apologetic. They wished merely to be good comrades and, as a matter of fact, whatever the preliminary embarrassment may have been on either side, these parties always ended by being completely and delightfully successful.

Christmas time was the American season *par excellence* and it was then that they out-did themselves. Wherever possible they assisted the organizers of the Lord Mayor's parties. During the Christmases that they were in Bristol they themselves

entertained thousands of the city's children, more particularly from its poorer and damaged portions. Indeed, to some extent almost every American became a Santa Claus. They left behind them a trail of sweets, chewing gum, peanuts, and, for the older members of the community, cigars, cigarettes and an occasional bottle of whisky. It was among the children that they were at their best. There was, for example, a party at Clifton College, and the rumour got about that this was going to be unusually grand. On the day appointed, therefore, over twice as many children turned up as had been invited and they came from every part of the city; but they were all made welcome nonetheless. Soon children, G.I.s, officers, the Lord Mayor and General Omar Bradley were enjoying themselves in a way that would have delighted the heart of Mr. Pickwick. On 25 April, 1943 the Lord Mayor, Alderman H. A. Wall, entertained at lunch representatives from the twenty Bristols which are scattered over the United States. As usual the Americans did not come empty-handed and on this occasion they presented the city with the Stars and Stripes.

Naturally the story of Americans in Bristol is not altogether one of unmitigated mutual appreciation. There were some censorious misanthropic trouble-makers both among them and among the Bristolians. Not long after their arrival, therefore, stories began to circulate purporting to record the unpleasant things the newcomers had said about Britain and of the equally unpleasant things which the English had said about them. "The British have two flags," so one story ran, "the red and the yellow." Then there were jibes about Dunkirk and Tobruk. "The only thing that the British are any good at is retreat." On the other hand the old chestnut of the last war, about the Americans' late arrival, was dug up and put into circulation. "How green is my ally," was another taunt that the Americans themselves particularly loved. These stories, though unpleasant, did little harm for it was obvious that they were specially manufactured and put about by people who wanted to make trouble. "I hate both you and your country," observed a truculent American who had been too familiar for too long with John Barleycorn. Such people, however, were figures of fun and very exceptional. Soon it became a matter of pride with Americans and their British friends to outdo each other in the number of

such stories they could tell and the number of specific places in which each of them was supposed to have originated. So the rumours died away.

A more serious cause of misunderstanding at first arose from the superior pay of the American soldiers. Some of them, without any intention of wounding the susceptibilities of the British Tommy, were unduly expansive in the manner in which they made the dollars spin. There were differences, it is true, but these were very much exaggerated, and the belief was certainly unjustified that all Americans had an abundance of money all the time. Like soldiers everywhere the man with money in his pocket tended to spend it recklessly and so he did not have it long. Moreover, a considerable proportion of the American soldier's pay was kept back for him by his own Government; and there was another consideration which Englishmen often forgot—they could make their money go further in their own country than strangers. When on leave the Englishman could go home but the American spent his time in hotels where he often paid more than he could afford.

Still another grievance arose when the transport problem of the country became acute. There was some irritation because of the Americans' apparent waste of petrol. "They leave their engines running for hours," it was said. "They go out on joy rides and pick up girls while we have not enough petrol for our regular business." Many of these charges were false, though it is true that among the Americans, as among the British, there were sometimes men who were too lazy to turn off their engines when standing still, and both undoubtedly picked up girls. Sometimes the Americans did misuse service vehicles, as did their British allies, but, if discovered, retribution by Uncle Sam was wont to be speedy and severe.

The American negro, however, was the centre of the most unpleasant rumours of all. In part this was the fault of the Americans themselves, for the ordinary Englishman was quick to see the strict line that was drawn between the two races. Egalitarian Englishmen, ignorant of the complexity of the American inter-racial problem, sometimes said "the Yanks think the blacks good enough to fight for them, but they are not prepared to stand them a drink." If black and white soldiers of the same country cannot meet in the same club, it was

argued, then the black men must be a highly objectionable lot. This impression, coupled with vague ideas about the alleged sexual habits of the American negro, picked up in cinemas and in casual reading, prepared the ground for a rich crop of rumours. Southmead Hospital, it was said, was now virtually a lying-in home for unfortunate Bristol girls who had been seduced by negroes. This monstrous slander, which might have caused serious trouble, was fortunately killed at one blow when the Medical Officer of Health announced in the Press on 10 March 1943 that no black babies had been born in Bristol up to that time. After that, it is true that some illegitimacy was caused by the association of black Americans with English women, but the extent of this evil was exaggerated. Speaking broadly, in fact, the conduct of the American negroes was good, and if some English girls persisted in throwing themselves into the black arms of their burly admirers the negroes could not be expected to reject them. After all, these black soldiers were ordinary men, not Galahads.

During these three years there were gaucheries on both sides and some traditional prejudice to be overcome: there was ignorance, but there was also genuine mutual respect. The close sympathy and understanding between President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, the magnanimity of General Eisenhower, and the complete trust which existed between him and the British High Command, were examples for all to follow.

Besides prejudice and ignorance there was also a good deal of mystification. Thus to the ordinary Briton who had lived through three or four years of war the American troops appeared to be unduly pampered, while the G.I. often tended to look upon the Englishman as a poverty-stricken ally, whom it was his task to rescue from the enemy and later from the tyranny of his benighted institutions. England was ruled by kings and dukes; she sucked the life-blood out of her colonies; the Canadians and the rest must be dispirited people indeed when they continued to bear an unjust yoke. The American, replied the Englishman, is ruled by the almighty dollar; his country is lawless; and the Americans merely consist of odds and ends of people cast off by Europe, with a fairly large infusion from Africa. Such ideas were held only by the unthinking, or the uneducated, on both sides, but, among

more enlightened people, it was hard for the Englishman to understand American politics while undoubted friends of England were suspicious on moral grounds of the existence of the British Empire. It was wrong, they believed, for one people to rule another. Moreover, kingship, the House of Lords and an aristocracy were anachronisms. Their existence rendered the British claim to be a democratic country quite meaningless. Thus, after delivering a lecture on the British Empire to American officers, the speaker was approached by a young captain who had been apparently completely astounded by what he had heard. "I enjoyed your talk very much, Professor," he observed, "but I didn't believe a damn word you said. Come and have a rum and coke." "Thank you very much," replied the lecturer, "but will it dissolve?" He did not realize that the reference was not to fuel but to Coca-Cola.

With experience of each other, and greater knowledge, much of this misunderstanding was dissipated. As the rumours grew in number and violence, or died away, the surface of public opinion was swept by superficial waves of emotion, but even if there had been no rumours at all it was natural that after the first enthusiasm had worked itself out there would be a cooling off. Throughout the whole period, however, these fluctuations did not disturb the great volume of mutual goodwill that existed.

During the latter part of 1943 and early in 1944, another cause of difficulty arose. Here the blame must be placed upon the shoulders of the people of Bristol themselves and upon the city authorities, who in this instance were surprisingly inept. By now, England had been at war for four years, people were tired and life was becoming very difficult. Nothing, however, could excuse the selfishness shown by some citizens, who if they had had any experience of enemy occupation would have behaved in a very different manner. In preparation for D-Day, though the reason was not revealed, large numbers of Americans were temporarily stationed in Bristol. Somehow billets had to be found for them, but the Englishman, as always, regarded his house as his castle, and the interference by the State in private life, which had occurred since the beginning of the war, made him more than ever sensitive on this subject. The English people do not like the practice of billeting soldiers upon them,

and the nationality of the troops made no difference. There was nothing, therefore, peculiarly anti-American in the opposition to billeting which now developed, but those responsible for the selection of billets should have exercised more imagination. They should have used the machinery for disseminating information throughout the city which then existed. It is true that a letter from the Lord Mayor was sent to householders, asking for their help and co-operation. This, however, was not as effective as it might have been because it was sent out after billeting had begun and weeks after the gossips had got to work. As it turned out, there was little or no justification for the fears of the citizens. Many a householder who had looked forward to the arrival of the strangers with considerable misgivings discovered that these were groundless. A writer in the *Western Daily Press* for 8 June 1944, summed up this whole subject admirably:

Not long ago some residents on the West side of Bristol were bewailing the fact that they had to have American billetees. Now there is real sorrow in many homes. The young men came, they conquered and they are gone—literally vanished in a night. . . .

Shortly before D-Day the United Nations Friendship Committee was set up to look after wounded Americans and other allies. This body provided concerts and various kinds of entertainment for men in hospital; it organized garden parties, theatre parties and private hospitality for convalescents. Americans who returned to Bristol on leave came back to their old billets as honoured guests.

Among many letters received by the Lord Mayor and hundreds of other Bristol citizens, the following from Lieutenant-General John C. H. Lee may be taken as a sample:

H.Q. Communications Zone,  
European Theatre of Operations,  
U.S. Army,  
Office of Commanding General  
Nov. 30, 1944.

Dear Lord Mayor,

Our necessitated operational departure from the United Kingdom prevented me from personally thanking you in the



name of General Eisenhower and indeed each man and woman in the U.S. Forces, who was privileged in visiting your city. The hospitality and helpfulness of your people on so many occasions has enabled us to administer these forces, building with your own the team necessary for the Allied liberation of Europe. Through such understanding and natural kindnesses I believe we have more firmly moulded the friendly relations of our two nations.

As I write this some of our army are still in Great Britain and I know would also wish to share in these expressions.

In grateful appreciation of all that has been done to make our stay in the United Kingdom such an unforgettably happy experience and with abiding best wishes, always,

I remain,

ever gratefully yours,

John C. H. Lee.

In countless ways these men and women had done much to promote British-American understanding. They knew, if they ever visited this city again, they would be sure of a warm welcome, for the people of Bristol liked its Americans.

## XVIII

### BRISTOL REMEMBERS OTHERS IN DISTRESS

By 1943 the altered position of the Allies was obvious to all. The gigantic resources of the Americans were felt in every theatre of war, and the superb industrial achievement of Great Britain and the Dominions helped to provide the forces of the Commonwealth and Empire, as well as its friends, with more and better weapons. At last the battle of the Atlantic turned in favour of the Allies. In May the killing of U-boats substantially exceeded that of their production, and in the last three months of the year fifty-three were destroyed but only forty-seven allied merchant ships were sunk. Convoys arrived in British ports without loss, and for the four months ending on 18 September no merchant ship had been sent to the bottom. Meanwhile, more and larger planes were hurling bombs of increasing size and destructive power on Germany. Thus in one period of forty-eight hours in February, 2000 sorties were made by allied aircraft and round-the-clock bombing began. In June Mr. Churchill announced that British planes were able to drop more than twice the weight of bombs that had been possible in 1942 and their range was 1500 miles out and back. In the first six months of this year the tonnage of bombs dropped on Germany was thirty-five times greater than she was able to drop on Britain. All this time, moreover, the American Air Force was growing.

Far away on the steppes of Russia the battle raged through the bitter winter weather, Stalingrad was relieved on 2 February 1943 and along the whole line, which stretched from the Crimea to Finland, the invaders were driven back. Through the spring, summer and autumn, the retreat continued but at a terrible cost of life on both sides.

In Africa, too, after the brilliant victory of El Alamein, the Eighth Army enjoyed a series of triumphs. On 23 January 1943 it entered Tripoli. On 2 February Montgomery established

contact with General Leclerc's Fighting French, who had marched across the desert from French Equatorial Africa. In the course of the next few days the last Axis soldier was driven out of Libya. Two jaws of the mighty vice were rapidly closing in to crush what remained of the German and Italian armies in Africa. On 7 April the Eighth Army established contact with the Americans. By 13 May Axis resistance in Africa had ceased, and "the mellow light of victory" was now beginning to play upon the Allied arms. Enemy ships and planes in the Mediterranean were destroyed in great numbers and during the early months of the year Sicily and southern Italy felt the weight of hostile air power. In April General Eisenhower stated that since the Allied landings in the previous November it was probable that about fifty per cent of enemy shipping bound for Africa had been sunk. A landing in Sicily was effected in July; Messina was occupied on 16 August; the last German was driven out on the following day and thus the whole island had been cleared in thirty-eight days. On 3 September the Eighth Army landed in Calabria. So, in less than two months, dangerous and extremely difficult amphibious operations had been carried through; Sicily was conquered and Allied armies were now once more on the mainland of Western Europe. On the same day that the Eighth Army landed in Calabria, Italy signed an armistice at Syracuse and not long after that Italians were fighting on the Allied side. The long and bloody battle of Italy had been joined.

In the Pacific the forces of the United States were deployed, and slowly, but relentlessly, Americans, New Zealanders and Australians drove the Japanese back; islands were cleared; enormous losses were inflicted on the enemy, but in that savage and sustained fighting a cruel toll in life and materials was exacted from the Allies. In Burma, the British, American and Indian forces were able as yet to do little more than hold the foe at bay while resources were being gathered for the forward move. All this time the Allies were able to prove to the elusive Japanese that they had no monopoly in the art of jungle warfare.

In 1943 Goering gave Bristol little more than cursory attention. There were two air raid warnings in January and four in February. On 13 March the enemy dropped two petrol bombs one of which fell harmlessly in an open field while

the other damaged a house at Yatton. There were five warnings in April and two in May. Towards the end of that month, a German airman was rescued from the sea off Clevedon, while a few days later the body of another was washed ashore at Portishead. After several warnings in June and July, an unexploded photographic-flash bomb was found at Winford on the 31st. Throughout September the siren was silent. There was one warning in October, another in November and none in December.

Now that victory seemed almost in sight Bristolians began to talk of the grander city that was to rise in the future. Many highly imaginative, but quite impracticable, schemes were propounded by amateur town-planners, and people heard of the surprising and ingenious things that were to be done to the old city. Everyone now became a planner, and no village could have been more taken up with its preparations for the annual fête than Bristol was with her ideas on reconstruction.

On 14 April of this year the city was saddened by the untimely death of Alderman A. W. Cox who had been a member of the Emergency Committee since its inception. A Northamptonshire man by birth, Mr. Cox came to Bristol in 1921 as the first full-time Education Secretary of the Bristol Co-operative Society. He was already a well-known figure in the Co-operative movement and his work for it in Bristol was notable. It was he who made the Co-operative Eisteddfod such a popular and meritorious musical festival; he was largely responsible for the building of the Co-operative Educational Centre; an omnivorous reader himself, he was untiring in his efforts to promote among his fellow members and the citizens of Bristol in general a discriminating appreciation of the things of the mind. Mr. Cox was elected to the City Council in 1927. In 1938 his outstanding work led to his election as leader of the Labour Party in the City Council and he became an Alderman two years later. He was a keen party man, but he honourably observed the political truce during the war. He spent himself without reserve in the service of his adopted city and more particularly as a member of the Emergency Committee from 1939 to 1943. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that A. W. Cox worked himself to death, and his passing left a gap in the public life of Bristol that was hard to fill. His career affords an

example that men and women of all parties and degrees might well be proud to emulate.

The river of generosity that had flowed into Bristol since the beginning of the war was still flowing strongly and was destined to go on flowing till the close of the war and afterwards. From the Commonwealth and Empire came a stream of gifts that was almost embarrassing in its extent and variety, but was always welcome. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, showered money and goods upon Bristol. The Cayman Islands, Uganda, Southern Rhodesia, other colonies and protectorates and India joined in this generous work. It has already been seen that at the beginning of the war numbers of Bristol children found homes and friends among the kind people of the Dominions and the United States. To the utmost of her resources Bristol in turn sent help to other British cities from 1941 until the end of the war—Manchester, London, Southampton, Plymouth, Birmingham, Weston-super-Mare, Bath and Exeter.

Large sums of money were raised in the War Weapons Week, the Wings for Victory campaign, Salute the Soldier and kindred causes. There was a Fire Guard memorial fund, the Red Cross Penny a Week Fund and many more. Over £53,000 were contributed to Bristol's Own Fund, which was devoted to the use of Bristol men and women serving in the Forces.

As soon as France fell the Friends of the French Volunteers established an active branch in the city. This body also raised considerable sums of money for the stricken ally and in various ways did all it could to assist the French exiles in Britain. At the end of the war a Bristol recreational hut was established at Falaise and since the close of hostilities an entente cordiale has been established between the cities of Bristol and Bordeaux.

In other lands millions of Allied people were suffering from the ruthless violence of the enemy to an extent unknown in Britain. These countries had no moat to protect them, and the invader had marched into their territories and pillaged to his heart's content. Bristol was anxious to render these people such aid as she was capable of giving. In 1941 all eyes were turned on Russia. The crimes and treacheries of that country were now overlooked, though the British people found it hard to forgive the rape of the Baltic states. It was the brave Russians, however,

not their Government, for whom the average Briton felt a warm regard. They were now fighting with a tenacity and a courage that stilled all criticism. For over a year they fell back, fighting every inch of ground, while their beloved country was turned into a desert by the blasting heat of battle and their own policy of "scorched earth."

The Soviet's need was great, and Britons of all shades of political opinion were glad to help their new ally. Later, when the Comintern was disbanded, it seemed that at last the cloud of suspicion and fear which had bedevilled Russo-British relations for so long was to melt away. The two peoples, while still pursuing their different ways of life, might yet be friends. Fortunately, few at the time knew anything about Stalin's ingratitude nor of the sneers with which the convoys from Britain were received by Soviet officials. The truculent perversity of Russia in the post-war years, her rapacious domination of neighbouring countries, the revival of the Comintern under the new name of Cominform and the whole degrading story of her foreign policy were wrapped in the mists of the future. For the moment the sun shone upon British-Russian friendship. Russian plays, Russian music, Russian art now became the rage.

For years past there had been a Bristol Society for the Promotion of Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R. Since the beginning of the war the Communists in the city had never wearied in their laudation of Russian achievements and in their denunciations of the imperialist warmongers. More important than these were the ordinary working people who, while they detested Communism, revered the idea behind the great Russian experiment; but not the way in which it had been perverted. With all its blemishes, they felt that the U.S.S.R. was a great working-class experiment, from which in time much good might result.

On 24 October 1941, at a meeting held in the Council House, it was resolved that:

This meeting of representative citizens of Bristol pledges its wholehearted support in aid of the Russian war effort and hereby decides to set up a Council with the appropriate executive committee to raise money for the Russian Red Cross and to carry on such other activities in aid of the Russian war effort that the Council or its executive committee may approve.

The man in the street, as he emptied his pockets into Mrs. Churchill's Aid to Russia collecting tins, breathed a sigh of relief that the Comintern policy of world revolution had been dropped, and that Britain and Russia henceforward could live together in peace.

Within a month after the opening of the appeal over £8000 had been collected. The enthusiasm of the Bristol factory workers would have made the sourest Soviet official almost cheerful if he could have beheld it. Thus in one works the employees, of their own free will, resolved that for the next three months one shilling a week should be deducted from the wages of adults and sixpence from those of juveniles, and that the sum so collected should be handed over to the Russian Red Cross Fund. On all sides there was a similar eagerness to help the gallant Russian people in their historic struggle. By the beginning of January 1942 the Fund amounted to over £14,000, a year later it stood at £18,830 and by June 1943 it had reached £27,201. Thereafter the return was small but altogether a sum somewhere in the neighbourhood of £30,000 was collected.

Dozens of lectures were given in factories; there was a flag day, cinema shows, exhibitions, dances and youth displays. There were meetings at the Colston Hall at which the heroism of Russia was praised. Russian trade unionists addressed a great Bristol audience eloquently in their own language, not one word of which their listeners understood, but the response was none the less vociferous. Soviet officials marched in a civic procession; Red Army Day, the entry of Russia into the war, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the U.S.S.R. and of the Red Army were enthusiastically celebrated. A young Russian woman sniper, who was reputed to have killed 309 Nazis, received a royal welcome from the University students, and, though conversation with her had to be carried on through an interpreter, her gentle manner belied her sanguinary reputation. The Stalingrad sword was on show in the Art Gallery at one time, and Bristol resolved to establish a ward in the Stalingrad hospital. Even then the enthusiasts for Russia were not satisfied, and so the Lord Mayor's Aid to Russia Council was swept into at least two demonstrations against its will. By 1943, in fact, it was becoming plain that for some, at least, of those concerned

with this unending appeal it was not merely a question of raising money. They were anxious to popularize the social, political and economic ideas of the Soviet. Not all the Russian visitors to Bristol during this year were over-considerate in their attitude to the damage which Bristol had sustained. Their criticisms were always frank although frequently based on very slight knowledge of the facts. According to some of them the efforts made by the British nation as a whole, the hardships it had endured, were trifles as compared with those which their country had undergone, and they hinted that the munitions and other supplies which Britain had sent were a miserable recompense for their noble fortitude. Englishmen, also, were conscious of their sacrifices and so some Bristolians began slowly to realize that whatever the virtues of their great ally might be, and she unquestionably had many, modesty was not one of them. The feeling developed that Russia had been given a fair innings and that it was now the turn of some other allied nation.

China was in the war before any of the others. Her losses were on a gigantic scale, but until Great Britain had been attacked by Japan the sufferings of China seemed remote. For years the Chinese had been made familiar with that same barbarism which Indo-China, Malaya, Thailand, Burma, Indonesia and the islands of the south Pacific experienced in 1942. Ruined homes, cities laid waste, flood, famine, pestilence, torture and death had become almost commonplace matters to the people of China. It was, therefore, with feelings of relief that Britons heard of a nation-wide appeal for China launched under the leadership of Lady Cripps. Anything that could be done to help that country must necessarily be only a token and deplorably slight in relation to her need.

In the spring of 1942 Bristol turned her attention to China. During the next months preparations went forward, but neither the Chinese Ambassador nor his officials were particularly responsive. They could not spare the time to come to Bristol and they were somewhat vague in their suggestions of alternative speakers. Finally, however, on 17 September, the Lord Mayor convened a meeting at which the following resolution was passed:

That this meeting of representative citizens of Bristol, assembled in the Council House, having heard an address...



on the great and urgent need for giving aid to China, our country's ally, it is hereby resolved to launch an appeal for funds to do all in its power to bring aid and succour to the suffering people of China.

Once more, therefore, a council and an executive committee were set up. It was decided that the main appeal should take place in October and that a Chinese Exhibition should be opened at the Y.M.C.A. hut at the Centre where, in due course, a small, but entrancing collection of Chinese works of art was assembled.

Chinese films were shown; there were demonstrations of Chinese music on gramophone records; experts on China lectured to factory audiences, churches, clubs and a variety of other bodies. There were collections, a flag day, and contributions from firms. A Chinese speaker addressed a great meeting at the Colston Hall and the Lord Mayor sent a letter to the Mayor of Chungking. This was specially transcribed into Chinese. It was in the following terms:

The Council House,  
Bristol 1.  
September 1942.

Dear Mr. Mayor,

In the name of my fellow citizens I, Alderman E. T. Cozens, Justice of the Peace, the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Bristol, greet you and through you I greet the gallant people of Chungking and all the brave people of China.

It is now over three hundred years since the first Bristol sailor who visited your historic land amazed his fellow citizens on his return by his reports of your commerce, your civilization and your greatness. Since then we have traded much with China but today the bonds that unite us are stronger than those of trade or any material thing, for we know that your battle is also ours and, though great distances, and a world at war, lie between us, we are one with you in spirit.

Like you in Chungking, we in far off Bristol have become acquainted with the horrors of war. We have seen our ancient monuments destroyed, our pleasant places laid waste and our fellow citizens slain. So we can understand the nature, if not the magnitude, of your losses, and sympathize with you in your sorrow.

But we are a trading people, to whom action comes easier

than words, and so we have set aside the month of October to be a China month during which our people will be exhorted to give liberally to China and by every means in our power we shall impress upon them their debt to her. I tell you these things, Mr. Mayor, not to vaunt our endeavour but in order that you and your fellow citizens may know how profoundly we venerate your great country, her sacrifices, her tenacity and her noble patience in adversity.

Already flowers are growing on the ruins of our homes and bomb craters have been turned into gardens. So we trust it will be with China and that out of the grief, the desolation and the bitterness of the present time there will grow up the vigorous and majestic tree of a new China, whose roots are embedded deep in the soil of antiquity. Mr. Mayor, though word comes to us from you but seldom, though we have not as yet given you the help which you deserve, we have not forgotten and shall not forget you, and we shall be content with no peace that does not see China once more free, united and great

Yours sincerely,  
E. T. Cozens.

Within a month of the launching of the appeal the fund amounted to over £5000 and by the beginning of the new year that sum was more than doubled. Towards the end of 1943 a group of distinguished Chinese visited the city and expressed the thanks of their Government and people. They were received at the Red Lodge by the Lord Mayor, Alderman F. C. Williams, who announced in the course of his speech of welcome that over £12,000 had been raised in Bristol.

Before the appeal for China was closed the appalling state of other allied countries nearer home stirred the hearts of Bristolians. They, too, had been overrun by an implacable enemy, and they required all the help that could be given them. Their Governments were in exile and thousands of their most vigorous men, at the risk of their lives, had escaped from bondage to carry on the fight.

To begin with there was Greece. Great Britain had watched the brave struggle of the Greek people in 1940-41 with mingled sympathy and admiration. From the days of Byron she had never ceased to take a special interest in Greece, and once more the Greeks were showing themselves to be worthy inheritors of their country's great past. In 1941 Commonwealth soldiers

fought and died in the famous pass of Thermopylae, and gave a new lustre and a new significance to many a name familiar to the English schoolboy. They went down in their ships in the seas that Ulysses knew and they had fought against impossible odds on the Greek islands. By 1942 the condition of the country was more wretched than it had been during the vilest period of Turkish misrule. Famine was in the land, sickness was everywhere; 25,000 people were known to have perished since the German occupation and thousands more had been driven from their homes.

Greece was not alone in suffering. North of her lay Yugoslavia. When, in the spring of 1941, the young King Peter seized the reins of power and drove out the traitorous Regent, the British nation was deeply moved. Then, when Yugoslavia hurled her defiance at Germany and entered upon what was apparently a hopeless war rather than sacrifice her liberty and her honour, the admiration of the British people was unbounded. The brutal assault on Belgrade and the long tale of German atrocities that ensued was the price of gallantry. The German masters of the country used all their ingenuity to set Serb, Croat and Slovene against each other in order to contrive the death of the Yugoslav nation. These iniquities merely served to deepen hatred of the oppressor.

Between the wars, Great Britain was in some ways more interested in Czechoslovakia than in any other east European nation. President Masaryk, the father of his people, was well known and highly esteemed in England as was his son Jan Masaryk, for so long Ambassador at the Court of St. James. Unquestionably Czechoslovakia was the most successful new democracy that emerged from the first World War. During the short period of independence that was allowed her, she tried honestly to treat the minority groups within her frontiers with justice. She successfully promoted the wellbeing of her people and wished to live at peace with her neighbours. When, in 1938, Great Britain allowed Germany to begin the destruction of Masaryk's handiwork without raising a hand in protest many a Briton felt that the good name of his country had never sunk so low. The subsequent behaviour of the Germans served but to strengthen this belief. Between March 1939, when the whole country was finally occupied, and the middle of May 1943,

50,000 Czechs were killed by the Germans, about 200,000 were sent to German concentration camps and more than 500,000 were forced from their homes to work in Germany and German occupied territory. Over and above this drain on the nation's life, thousands of Czech Jews were imprisoned, deported or killed.

Then there was Poland, that Tristram among nations, for surely its "name has been of sorrow and grief has made its home" in that unhappy land. The Poles are gallant, they are highly gifted, they are hard-working, they are devout, yet no country in Europe has a sadder history. The restoration of Polish independence was one of President Wilson's Fourteen Points and Great Britain was proud to welcome back this historic people into the family of free nations. Between the wars Polish policy often appeared to the people of Britain to be both wayward and unwise, but the deep-rooted goodwill toward Poland that was traditional in this country withstood every shock. In 1939 Poland, too, felt the full weight of German might and during the ensuing years her griefs were sore indeed. Here again was the same story—starvation, disease, brutal reprisals and murder. The Poles were tortured, they were robbed and deported, their cities were destroyed, their schools and universities were closed and their libraries were burnt. Henceforward they were to be a slave people.

Having done what it could to give aid to Russia and to China it seemed fitting that Bristol should give some material token of her sympathy to these four unhappy nations. As it was clearly impossible to run four separate appeals at the same time, and as none of them was pre-eminent in misery, the Lord Mayor, Alderman H. A. Wall, decided to appeal to his fellow citizens on behalf of Greece, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland together. Once more a representative body of citizens was called together at the Council House. Once more a resolution was passed in support of the Lord Mayor's proposal; a council was set up and an executive committee appointed on 26 May 1943. During the early autumn there were lectures of many kinds and the whole month of October was set apart for the Four Nations Appeal. Great interest was aroused by the demonstrations of national cooking, given by notable experts from each of these countries. This novel feature was a great

boon to Bristol housewives who were instructed in new ways of making the unappetizing potato and the lenten rations, to which the country was now reduced, more palatable. At a concert given by the London Philharmonic Orchestra Dr. Malcolm Sargent arranged that the programme should contain representative music of each of the four nations. An exhibition of pictures, sculpture, fabrics and *objets d'art* was staged at the Victoria Rooms. This was opened on 18 October by the Duchess of Kent, herself a member of the Greek Royal House. The result of all these efforts was that on 20 December the Treasurer, Mr. E. J. Taylor, was able to report that the sum of £9197 had already been collected. If those who sat round the committee table that day applauding this announcement could have foreseen the fate that lay in store for these nations there would have been little pleasure in the memory of work well done; but they did not know these things.

Three weeks after the Four Nations appeal closed another one was opened, this time for the victims of the Bengal famine. Unfortunately one section of the appeal committee wished to forward any funds that might be collected to the High Commissioner for India who had applied for help, while another section wished to send it to the India Relief Committee. Thus, as with the Russian appeal, political party differences obscured and confused the work of kindness. There was, nevertheless, much goodwill for India, and on the advice of the Lord Mayor, the £2276 which had been collected, was equally divided between the two funds.

During the early months of 1945 the Lord Mayor made an appeal on behalf of the Royal and Merchant Navies. Again a council was set up, with an executive and other committees. Great enthusiasm for this cause prevailed, for all were agreed that these gallant men should be remembered by a grateful nation. Shortly after this appeal had been launched the Colston Hall was destroyed by fire. This disaster threw the arrangements of the committee into chaos, as a mass meeting was to have taken place there a few days later. Nevertheless, even though so many appeals had been made, the city responded generously. The Lord Mayor was able to transmit over £35,000 to the fund.

Just after the war ended, and in consequence of it, the last

of these appeals was made. In the war years numbers of Dutch servicemen and civilians had come to Bristol where they had made many friends. The K.L.M. was based on Whitchurch and its officers, as well as members of the Dutch fighting forces, were familiar figures at the Savages, at the Little Theatre, and at social gatherings of all kinds. In the autumn of 1944 the Battle of Arnhem, at which the first Airborne Division won immortal renown, forged a new link between the peoples of Holland and of Britain. The appeal for Arnhem was, therefore, enthusiastically supported, and with it the appeal for the Save the Children Fund. As a result of strenuous efforts over 21 tons of clothing was sent to Arnhem and about £10,000 were collected. Besides this appeal, Bristol received, as soon as the war ended, some hundreds of Dutch and other children into her homes. A large number of the Dutch children came from the village of Putten, which has been called the Dutch Lidice, and in the post-war period the work of assisting the victims of the war in France, Greece, Germany and elsewhere continued.

## XIX

### A YEAR OF VICTORIES

AT THE beginning of 1944 victory seemed almost in sight and, indeed, some sanguine persons were saying that the boys would be home at Christmas. Unhappily, however, the end was not so near. Terrible losses were to be exacted from the Allies but, though another year and a half of savage fighting still lay ahead, the prospect in January 1944 was bright. In the past twelve months the defences of the enemy had been pierced at many points and his empire had been substantially reduced. He had lost Africa, he was in process of losing Italy, and vast sections of Russia had been reoccupied by the Soviet armies. All through the winter of 1944 the Russians maintained their offensive at full strength, for Generals Frost and Snow had no terrors for them. At length the Germans were driven back from the gates of Leningrad, and a Russian army was massed on the Estonian frontier several weeks before the first signs of spring appeared. Meanwhile, in the south, the victorious Muscovites were sweeping forward and entered Roumania in March. Odessa was retaken in April and before the end of May the Crimea was cleared. Finland signed an armistice in September. In the summer the Russian armies of the centre entered Poland and the heroic people of Warsaw, believing that their deliverers were near, rose in revolt on 1 August. After two months of savage, though useless, fighting, the rising was extinguished in blood, and the year ended with the Polish capital still in enemy hands.

Roumania sued for peace at the end of August and shortly afterwards re-entered the war on the Allied side. Bulgaria surrendered in September and the Russian army pushed up the Danube, while the Germans began with great difficulty to extricate themselves from Yugoslavia and Greece. British troops landed in this latter country in October. For some time, however, it was not Germans they had to fight but the famine and disease which preyed upon the stricken Greek nation.

# THE ARCHITECT OF VICTORY



In the desperate days of the severe air raids, Mr. Winston Churchill and Mrs. Churchill walked among the ruins, solemn-faced. Behind the Prime Minister is the, then, Chief Constable, Sir Charles Maby, and among the party was Mr. Winant, the American Ambassador.



When victory was in sight—on 21 April 1945—Mr. Churchill returned to the University of which he is Chancellor. Crowds waited in the streets to welcome him.





Flags of the Allies waved over the historic proclamation car outside the Council House on 9 May 1945, when peace was proclaimed to the citizens of Bristol. They had waited a long time.

Greek gratitude to Britain is well illustrated in a letter signed by a number of people in the parish of St. Basil, Piraeus, addressed to the Lord Mayor of Bristol. In speaking of the help which they had received from some Bristol soldiers they stated:

We cannot find suitable words to describe their noble, comely, charitable and alert character and behaviour. They have proven in fact real angels.

But what has touched us mostly was that against our persistence to have their names, they all were politely abstaining to do this by claiming modestly that there was not a necessity to know their names as the execution of their duty does not require any recompense in any way. **WHAT AN EMINENT AND LOFTY ABNEGATION.**

This is the reason that has compelled us to address to your lordship this present letter as the head of the city of your area in order that we pained but always valiantly thinking Greeks, in acknowledging consciously the enormous obligations we have to your country, consider it an imperative duty to express to your lordship our sincerest heartily and eternal gratitude and thankfulness for what the children of your areas are doing on our behalf.

The allied cause prospered elsewhere during this wonderful year. In Italy the Eighth and Fifth Armies fought their way slowly but surely up the peninsula. Powerful German forces were thus engaged that were sorely needed by the Führer in other sections of his far-extended battle line. After a series of vigorous attacks, Cassino was finally captured on 18 May. Five days later the British force which had landed at Anzio in January launched an offensive and the Allies entered Rome on 4 June.

While these great events were taking place in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Mediterranean area, General Eisenhower, in January, assumed command of the Allied forces that were being prepared for the invasion of France. Through the winter and spring months, men, munitions, planes, ships and supplies of all kinds were assembled for this difficult and dangerous task. The air attack upon Germany and German-occupied territory was intensified. Great cities were reduced to rubble, every bridge over the Seine below Paris was destroyed; railway lines,

marshalling yards and rolling stock were demolished, and the enemy's lines of communication were disrupted. In spite of all, Hitler still asserted that his western wall would hold and that no permanent landing of Allied forces in strength was possible.

On 6 June Great Britain and her Allies returned to France in the greatest armada that had ever sailed upon the seas of the world. Despite fierce resistance the landing was successfully carried through. It was now that Hitler discovered that since his ingenious opponents were denied all continental harbours they had invented harbours of their own which proved to be surprisingly efficient. Before the Germans could hurry sufficient forces to the danger point, thousands of men with mountains of equipment were landed, and the Normandy beaches were firmly held. Soon the smiling countryside of France, that had so far escaped, was scarred by war.

While the British and Canadians held down the main German force the Americans were enabled to clear the Cherbourg peninsula and sweep on victoriously through Brittany, Anjou and Maine. So it was possible for them to swing round behind the German army opposed to the British and Canadians and threaten it from the rear. Thereupon, the Germans, after an unsuccessful counter attack at Avranches, began a headlong retreat which took on the character of a rout by the time they reached the Seine. While they were still struggling with improvised ferry boats to pass this barrier, the Americans crossed the river successfully a few miles below Paris and poured into the Pas de Calais. It was estimated that in the course of this fighting the Germans lost over a million men and an enormous quantity of guns, tanks and stores. As the German armies were thus being thrust back from the Atlantic seaboard another Allied army landed in the south of France on 15 August, captured Toulon and Marseilles, and advanced up the Rhone valley. In the south west the people of Bordeaux threw off the German yoke before they were relieved from outside and by the time the Americans entered Paris in August the capital was in the process of achieving the same result. In those intoxicating summer weeks, the British and Canadians, having swept the Germans across the Seine, chased them to the Belgian frontier, to the Dutch frontier and beyond. Brussels was

thus freed, together with most of Belgium and a part of the Netherlands.

This series of resounding victories ended with the gallant, though unavailing, attempt of the First Airborne Division to establish a footing beyond the Rhine. After several critical days, in which this British Division added new lustre to its country's arms, the main British force failed to break through to them, and so the now hard-pressed First Division had to be extricated, a difficult task which was not carried through without heavy losses of brave men. The close of the year left the Germans still in control of a number of French ports while other garrisons held out in different parts of France. Although the Rhine crossing was not yet made, the Allies were already tightening their grip on those three great gateways into Germany—Belfort, the Saar, and Aachen. The German still had fight in him, as was shown in December when von Rundstedt struck back savagely with all his available forces at the Americans in the Ardennes. This sudden stroke enabled him to press his opponents' line dangerously back towards the Meuse and when the year ended it was still possible that the enemy might effect a complete break-through. In Italy the Allied armies, after heavy fighting, cleared the enemy out of Tuscany and before the year ended had debouched into the basin of the Po.

On the other side of the world 1944 was also a year of victories. The Marshalls, then the Marianas, were captured by the Americans, and at length they reached the Philippines. So the long Japanese lines of communication with their outlying conquests were threatened, and this compelled the Japanese to risk a sea battle with the mighty naval power that the United States had now developed in the Western Pacific. The result of the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October was disastrous for Japan, and everywhere, in fact, the position at sea steadily improved throughout the year. Thanks to the appearance of the Russians on the frontiers of Norway, the *Tirpitz* which had been sheltering in a remote northern fiord was compelled to seek refuge farther south, only to be attacked and sent to the bottom by the R.A.F. shortly after she occupied her new berth. The average life of a German U-boat on active service this year was about half as long as it took to build her. Thus this menace to Britain's life-line was at length mastered.

During the first half of 1944, it seemed probable that Bristol might again be in the battle line. She was well aware that she would be a tempting target for those mysterious secret weapons about which Hitler had boasted for years past. Instead of frightening his opponents by the fantastic rumours he started, Hitler merely quickened up the Allied preparations for the invasion of Europe. Through the winter and spring of this year there was a grim race between the two mighty antagonists. The Germans believed that if they could bring all their new weapons into action before the Allied invasion began it might be prevented. By means of V1s and V2s and still other weapons they had in mind, Britain might yet be crushed and a German victory ensured. If, on the contrary, the Allies argued, the enemy could be driven back from the French coast before his preparations were complete, the cities and ports of southern England would be spared from destruction and the places from which the projectiles were discharged might be destroyed before they were brought into full use.

There were two alerts in each of the first three months of the year and on 27 March a widespread attack was made by the Luftwaffe on the West Country. The German overseas radio announced that the assault had been directed against the British west coast port of Bristol, and that a large number of high explosives and thousands of incendiary bombs had been dropped in half an hour. The Germans appeared to have forgotten that this same west coast port was already, according to their own statements, entirely destroyed. The account which they gave this time was as inaccurate as that which they had given in the closing weeks of 1940. No bombs fell on Bristol that night and the only damage suffered by the city was due to A.A. shells.

The siren was heard once in April and on 15 May, after an alert on the previous day, two high-explosive bombs fell in Kingsweston Lane, three in the Bedminster division and five at Abbots Leigh. Some slight damage to property was caused and one soldier was killed, a very poor return for the expenditure of ten bombs whose combined weight was 6000 kilogrammes. On the 19th of this same month the Paris radio announced that dynamite meteors were being used, chiefly against Portsmouth, Southampton and Bristol. As no unusual projectiles were seen,

it seems that this story was mainly intended for the consumption of the Germans whose zeal for war was evaporating.

The familiar topics of the repair of damaged buildings, the supplies of static water and the everlasting question of shelters continued to engage the attention of the civic authorities. Indeed, over a month after D-Day sixty-four people still resorted to these refuges, and in particular to No. 2 Portway Tunnel. There were other problems, however, that occupied a good deal of time, some of which were the direct result of the fact that Bristol had become a garrison town swarming with strangers. More British Restaurants were required and greater facilities for the entertainment of young people. Thus there was no relaxation in the effort required from those concerned with the government of Bristol, even if life for ordinary citizens was becoming more tranquil. Instead of bombs and blitz stories, there was now much talk about the qualities of the new prefabricated houses. In fact, during the later years of the war and in the post-war period as well, the housing problem was one of the most baffling with which the city was called upon to grapple.

Down to the sounding of the last alert, on 13 June 1944, men and women continued to turn up for duty as usual, but before autumn the city was at last out of the fight. The majority of the evacuated children who still remained in the country returned. The authorities began to disband the various wartime services and only a skeleton staff remained. Fire Guard duties were relaxed in September; blackout regulations were modified and before long disappeared; buildings that had been used for various kinds of civil defence work were released. The Home Guard gave its farewell salute in Bristol on 4 December and Captain Talbot Plum, one of the first to join, carried the keys back to Territorial Army headquarters. A year later the civil defence services had ceased to exist. Even though the reason which made this possible gave much gratification, the work was not wholly pleasurable. A great deal of thought and effort had been put into the creation of these various bodies, the call for public service had been splendidly answered and strong loyalties had developed, but the old order was changing "yielding place to new."

## XX

### THE PORT OF BRISTOL

IN SOME ways 1944 may be considered the year of the port, although it had already played a splendid part long before D-Day. Preparations for war were well advanced when hostilities began in 1939. In the closing months of that year the completion of the extension to the Royal Edward Dock and of other work under construction was hurried forward. As a result of this foresight, four additional deep water berths, a new wharf at the oil basin and other improvements were soon ready. A tidal oil berth, a jetty and six more sidings, 2900 yards in length, were also constructed at Avonmouth before the full strain of the war was felt, while across the river at Portishead an additional deep berth, quay, and sidings were built. After the fall of France, when the ports of the south-east of the island were virtually paralysed, railway trucks, barges, and other equipment were sent to Bristol from that area and, as has been seen, numbers of London dockers also arrived.

As soon as hostilities broke out the Port Emergency Committee which had already been set up at Bristol, as at all the chief British ports, began its work. This body contained representatives of the port authority, of shipping, road, rail and canal interests, various Ministries, traders, organized labour, the British fighting services, and later of the Americans. It was established to maintain the efficiency of the port and to minimize the effects of such losses as the enemy might inflict. To ensure that nothing would be allowed to obstruct its work, it was given wide executive powers. This committee was responsible to the Regional Port Director who represented the Ministry of War Transport. As long as the war lasted a representative of the Port of Bristol was maintained in the Shipping Diversion Room at the headquarters of the Ministry of War Transport in London. From this room incoming ships were directed to appropriate ports and, in general, the movement of vessels, was regulated.

When, in 1940, the Clyde, the Mersey, and the Bristol Channel became the principal ocean gateways to Britain, the enemy devoted much of his attention to them. The elimination of the western ports was, in fact, one of his chief aims. The damage which the Germans contrived to inflict on the docks, however, was slight in proportion to the enormous effort they made. Losses were most serious in the city docks, but these had long since become of minor importance as compared with Avonmouth. In the course of the raids a granary, sheds, warehouses, lumber yards, quays and river walls at the Princes Wharf, Cumberland Basin and other places were either demolished or damaged. The destruction of St. Philip's Bridge was the enemy's most considerable triumph, since this incommoded shipping in the upper part of the floating harbour for some time. At Avonmouth private water-side buildings were hit, together with rolling stock, and some property belonging to the Port of Bristol. Portishead's only loss was one foot-bridge.

The sole grave disaster took place less than a fortnight before D-Day, when the port was at its busiest. This was the result, not of enemy action, but of an accident aboard the American tanker *Pan Massachusetts* lying in the Royal Edward Dock. She had discharged about half her cargo of 16,600 tons of petrol when an explosion due to a concentration of petrol vapour occurred in her pump room. A large section of the deck was ripped open by the force of the explosion and the ship at once took fire. The flames spread to her magazine and several cases of small arms ammunition exploded. Fortunately, before the fire reached the larger ammunition, four N.F.S. fire boats arrived on the scene and flooded the magazine. Special appliances were rushed to Avonmouth from places as far distant as Taunton and Swindon, and the flames, which were brought under control in about two hours, were completely extinguished by the following morning. So much water was pumped into the *Pan Massachusetts* that she settled down on an even keel at the bottom of the dock. For a time there was the possibility that the petrol which ran out of the ship and spread over the water might ignite and carry the flames to other vessels laden with combustible materials lying in berths nearby. A floating boom was therefore placed across the dock which held back the petrol and this happily did not take fire. Only slight damage was



caused to the docks and it was not long before the *Pan Massachusetts* was refloated and dispatched to Barry for repairs. Three members of the crew lost their lives in the explosion; owing to the danger of petrol fumes, work on nearby sidings and wharves was stopped for some days, while three berths were immobilized for about six weeks.

Inevitably the war altered the character of the port's business. The trade in foreign corn declined and was replaced by home-grown cereals brought to Avonmouth to be ground. The importation of animal feeding stuffs, bananas and Irish cattle entirely ceased, while other normal imports were drastically reduced. Increasing quantities of other foodstuffs arrived and by the time intensified importations of grain began again in preparation for the invasion of Europe, Bristol had become one of the principal food ports of the kingdom. Even more remarkable was the enormous increase in the importation of oil. Indeed, for several years Bristol was the chief oil port of the country. Before the war about a million tons of petroleum products had passed each year through Avonmouth; in 1944 it amounted to nearly  $4\frac{3}{4}$  million tons. Special pipe-lines were laid down so that the petrol could be quickly distributed from Avonmouth to London and other places. This great undertaking was carried through so quietly that few people knew it was contemplated. Among other developments, three extra open berths in the Royal Edward Dock were adapted for the use of tankers. When importation was at its greatest it averaged no less than 91,000 barrels a day, and never before had any port in the United Kingdom handled so much oil in a period of twelve months. A writer in the *Petroleum Times* on the 11 October 1947 spoke of this work as "a stupendous effort reflecting the highest credit on all concerned."

In 1945 the number of ships entering Avonmouth Docks was forty-five per cent, and the tonnage fifty-six per cent, greater than in the last year of peace. In 1944 and 1945 the total of imports at Avonmouth was more than double that of the pre-war years. Since ships as far as possible discharged their whole cargo in one place, instead of landing a part here and a part there, as had been the traditional practice, their number did not show so great an increase as would normally have been the case. The business of the port, however, altered in other respects.

Thus trade with Europe was brought to a standstill, while coastwise traffic grew prodigiously. This was mainly due to the necessity of carrying goods, and in particular coal, by sea in order to lessen the strain placed upon roads and railways.

As the toll of the U-Boats on Allied shipping increased and as the American war effort mounted, it became more than ever desirable that ships should discharge their cargoes and begin the outward passage in the shortest possible time. Speedy loading and dispatch were equally desirable when the Allies took the offensive in Africa, Italy and north-west Europe. In order to hasten unloading, cargoes were partly discharged overside into barges and either taken out of the port or landed in some quiet part of the docks, where the business of sorting and dispatch could more easily be carried out. At any moment an emergency demand for extra space might be made, but normal traffic had to be kept moving and nothing must be allowed to impede the steady flow of goods through the sheds.

From time to time disputes arose with labour, but they were never serious, even though the toil was exacting and the days were long. From Monday to Friday inclusive, a 12½-hour day was usual—8 a.m. to 8.30 p.m. In theory work stopped at 12 noon on Saturdays and at 5 p.m. on Sundays, but often it continued without respite throughout the 48 hours. Indeed, the weekends were frequently the busiest times of all because, owing to convoy requirements, vessels had to be cleared, or loaded and made ready for the outward passage, by Monday morning. The co-operation that existed between the port authority, organized labour, railway and road interests, the Services and all concerned, could not have been better. In particular the magnificent work of the dockers should be remembered and this is the more remarkable when it is borne in mind that some at least of these men who worked so strenuously and with such a willing spirit were elderly. Two of them, J. Pring, aged eighty-nine, and E. Hartney, aged eighty-six, had long passed the time when men are considered able to perform such heavy work. In a book of this nature it is fitting that the names of these two gallant octogenarians should be recorded. While the port authorities required the dockers to work long hours they did not forget their physical well-being. In order

that good hot meals at reasonable prices would be available, considerable sums of money were spent upon the provision of more and better canteens. It will, however, be the mobile canteens of the W.V.S. that the dockers will remember longest. By bringing their vehicles to the side of the ship, these ladies could supply the men with refreshments while causing the minimum loss of working time. Summer and winter, year in and year out, they could always be counted upon to be on hand with their sandwiches, their cups of tea and other good things. At the close of the war the W.V.S. dock canteen service found that it had made a profit of £3750. Half of this sum was presented to a benevolent fund for dockers while the remainder was divided among a number of charities nominated by the W.V.S. So large a profit, despite the fact that charges were always low, conveys some idea of the tens of thousands of snacks served by the tireless members of the W.V.S.

In addition to cargo and passenger vessels there were often eight tankers in the port all unloading at the same time. The fastest recorded discharge was effected by the *Château Thierry* whose cargo of "over 15,000 tons of gas and lamp oil" was pumped out in  $14\frac{1}{4}$  hours or at the rate of 1066 tons per hour. Other ships, though they did not equal this performance, were very close runners-up. The same speed appeared in the discharge of other kinds of cargo, and the result was that on occasions the sheds became dangerously full. In order to ease the strain a distributing depot was established at Wapley Common, near Yate, where there was ample space for sorting and distribution.

When the United States entered the war the Americans selected Bristol as their chief base for importing war supplies. New burdens were in consequence laid upon the dockers. Between 1942 and 1945 many thousands of Americans passed through the port, together with hundreds of thousands of tons of stores of all kinds and a quite incredible amount of mail, particularly at Christmastime. Coloured and White G.I.s worked side by side with the British dockers, part of whose task it was to instruct their Allies in the specialized business of handling cranes, electric trucks and other intricate port equipment. Later it was reported that these Bristol-trained Americans had acquitted themselves well on the African coast and elsewhere.

In 1943-44 American aeroplanes, tanks, locomotives and other heavy packages were landed. Some of the planes were dispatched in cases, stored in the ship's hold, but others arrived on deck, complete except for their propellers. They came in cargo ships, tankers, or any kind of vessel that could take them. The planes that arrived intact provided the port with new problems as it was necessary to use two cranes to land them. This was a very difficult operation, for the cranes, from the jibs of which the plane was suspended, had to be perfectly synchronized. The planes were placed upon specially constructed vehicles which carried them to Filton to be supplied with their propellers. Their wing stretch was so great that it was necessary to widen the dock gates and carry out various alterations on the road. For the handling of these gigantic packages a 60-ton floating crane and a 50-ton derrick were supplied by the Ministry of War Transport. As D-Day approached still heavier demands were made upon the port. Between May 1944 and March 1945, 196 vessels carrying 318,000 tons of supplies were loaded and dispatched, together with great quantities of petrol. During the same period thousands of tons of American supplies, some of which had been brought from Iceland, were sorted out at the Timber Yards, Cumberland Basin Wharf, before reshipment to the Continent. The American Sub-Port Commander, Colonel de Lesseps Morrison, was enthusiastic in his praise of the dockers and the port authority for the whole-hearted co-operation he found in Bristol. Later, Major-General Frank S. Ross wrote:

The part played by the port operated under your direction during the recent months has been an important factor in the success of our invasion forces. The splendid co-operation and assistance which you have rendered during this period is gratefully acknowledged.

I extend my thanks and sincere appreciation for a job well done. I know that with your continued support we will not fail to accomplish our mission."

Many strange vessels appeared at Avonmouth. There were parent ships for landing-craft. These were built on the lines of whalers, the landing-craft being hauled into the "belly" of the larger ship. Ocean-going landing-craft brought cargoes from

the United States and later sailed to the Mediterranean with war supplies. Cross-channel steamers, familiar to holiday makers on their way to the Continent in the days before the war, came and went, but these were shorn of their former glory as they had been adapted for the landing of infantry. Two train-ferry boats brought American tanks across the Atlantic, and ships from the Great Lakes, remarkable for their length and shallow draught, aroused much comment among the dockers. Various hospital ships, of which the largest was the Dutch liner *Oranje*, 11,674 tons, used Bristol; twenty-six American and British troop-ships disembarked and embarked men here. The largest ship that entered the port was the *Orion* of 23,371 tons and ships of 10,000 to 20,000 tons were common.

As in the wars of the past, Bristol maintained her tradition as a shipbuilder. Twenty-eight vessels were constructed by Messrs. Charles Hill and Sons Ltd, of which twenty-six were patrol vessels, corvettes, boom defence vessels, frigates and landing-craft intended for the Royal and Allied navies. Smaller craft were brought to the port by road, lifted into the dock, and tested.

In the space that is available here it is impossible to deal adequately with the manifold activities and achievements of the port of Bristol in the five-and-a-half years covered by this book. The record, however, is remarkable and it shows that the maritime traditions of the past still live on in Bristol.

## XXI

### THE END OF THE WAR

IN 1945 great events followed upon each other in quick succession. The New Year opened with an American counter-attack upon the northern flank of the German salient in the Ardennes. The enemy's advance was held and then the salient was driven in. Thus ended Germany's last gamble for victory. From then on she remained on the defensive. The Netherlands were cleared and the invaders were hurled back across the Rhine into their own country, with the British and Canadians in hot pursuit. Farther south, the victorious Americans and French crossed the Rhine at several places and fanned out over Germany.

From 4 February to 11 February President Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill and Mr. Stalin conferred in the Crimea and laid their plans for the shape of things to come. This was the last occasion on which the great President was destined to meet his two wartime colleagues. He died on 12 April when the victory for which he had striven for so long was clearly in sight. Two days after the end of the Yalta Conference, the Russians occupied Budapest, and the march up the Danube was soon resumed. Vienna fell on 13 April. In the meantime, after some stiff fighting in East Prussia, the Russians swept forward to Berlin, which fell on 2 May, two days after Hitler's obscure death. On the 4th all the Germans in North-West Germany, Holland, the Islands, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark capitulated to Field-Marshal Montgomery on Luneburg Heath. Three days later, the unconditional surrender of the Germans was signed at Rheims, and the shattered fatherland passed under the military occupation of the victorious Allies. Prague fell on 9 May.

Beyond the Alps the story was one of complete enemy collapse. On 28 April Italian partisans captured and murdered Mussolini, the man who had been revered almost as a god for over twenty years. Four days later the remaining German forces in Italy surrendered unconditionally.

In the Far East the treachery, cruelty and selfish ambitions of the Japanese were reaping their reward. General Slim and the sorely tried Fourteenth Army, that had endured so much and for so long, now swept forward. Mandalay was occupied at the end of March and Rangoon fell on 3 May. While the Fourteenth Army was thus clearing Burma of the Japanese and preparing for the reconquest of Malaya, the Americans, Australians and New Zealanders were driving the Japanese from the Pacific Islands that still remained to them, and in July the Philippines were once more in American hands. The Japanese had suffered irreparable defeat at sea and British and American ships of war were able to cruise unmolested in sight of the Japanese homeland. On 6 August the first atomic bomb was dropped at Hiroshima and the second on Nagasaki three days later. This gruesome demonstration of power horrified a world accustomed to horrors and brought about the immediate and unconditional surrender of Japan.

So the Allies won the complete victory for which they had fought. Everywhere their arms were triumphant, and yet the cessation of hostilities brought little joy in its train. The whole world stood aghast at the thought of the catastrophic possibilities that the atomic bomb held in store for mankind, and this strengthened the determination of the civilized world to ensure that the recently established United Nations Organization should succeed. The San Francisco Conference had opened on 25 April and the Charter of the United Nations was signed two months later. Although little of that enthusiasm which had hailed the appearance of the League of Nations in 1919 was evident when the new organization made its first bow on the stage of history, all were agreed that some such body was desirable. It was the constitution of the League, not the conception, which was defective and the representatives of the nations present at San Francisco did their utmost to avoid the mistakes of the past. In particular, they were determined to ensure that this time the international organization which they were creating should not fail through lack of power.

In Great Britain the Labour Ministers in the Government decided that with the close of the war in Europe there was no further need for a Coalition, and that normal party government should be resumed. On 23 May, therefore, Mr. Churchill, after

serving the nation for five years as Prime Minister, tendered the resignation of one of the greatest and most successful Governments that Britain has ever known. He formed his "Caretaker Government" on the 26th and the elections took place on 5 July. When the results were known on the 26th, Mr. Churchill resigned, and so passed from office the greatest of Britain's wartime ministers. A Labour Government, headed by Mr. Attlee, was formed on the following day and the new Parliament was opened by the King on 15 August.

The Bristol that emerged from the war in 1945 was a very down-at-heel and bedraggled place as compared with the city that entered it in 1939. Dilapidation was everywhere, the roads were bad and the shops that remained had little to offer their customers. In the five years that had come and gone since that June night in 1940 when the enemy first attacked the city there had been more than 548 alerts and on seventy-seven occasions bombs fell; 1299 people were killed and 3305 were injured. Had it not been for the efficiency of the rescue parties casualty lists would have been much longer, for without the persistent and perilous work of these skilled teams many of the survivors would have lost their lives.

The debris could be cleared away, the scars of war could be removed and a more spacious Bristol could be built, but what had been the effect of the war upon the people was the question in many minds in the summer of 1945. How had they come through the testing years? Were they capable of putting forth the effort that the period of reconstruction would require of them? The road back to peace was certain to be long and difficult and the whole country was tired, very tired, in 1945. If Great Britain was to survive as a great power, everything depended upon the energy, the determination and the intelligence of her people. There were those both at home and abroad that summer who considered that this task was impossible. They believed that Britain had sunk to the rank of a second- or even a third-rate power and that she could never rise again; the burdens and toils of the last five-and-a-half years were too heavy for any nation to bear and still be great. From being the universal banker that she once was, she was now the most heavily indebted nation in the world, her industries were geared to war production and much of her machinery was obsolete.



Some of her most populous cities were in a ruinous condition, her Merchant Navy was sadly depleted, some of her best overseas markets were lost, and her Empire appeared to be in process of dissolution. Seldom in history has a victorious country faced a less inviting prospect than Britain did in 1945, and what was true of the country in general was also true of her great cities, including Bristol. The battle was won, but to what purpose? If victory found the nation broken in body and weakened in spirit it would be a Pyrrhic victory. Many, indeed, were broken in body, but was the nation weakened in spirit?

In Bristol the rehousing of large sections of the population demanded instant attention for, in addition to the destruction caused by enemy action, little or nothing could be done during the war to deal with the everyday ravages of time. Again, in spite of the ceaseless efforts of the medical authorities to safeguard the city's health, it was well known that some diseases were getting out of hand and no one could yet estimate in full the psychological effects that the war had left behind. Factories that had specialized in the production of things required by the fighting forces must now as quickly as possible return to printing, to the making of paper, chocolate, civil aircraft, cigarettes and other peacetime work. So there was no time either for repining or pipe dreams of the future.

It was most unfortunate for Bristol that early in 1945, at a time of uncertainty about the future, she should be deprived of the wise counsel of one in whom she reposed unbounded confidence. Among all the loyal servants of the city there was none who devoted himself more wholeheartedly to its service than its Town Clerk, Mr. Josiah Green. He first became a member of the Corporation staff as a junior clerk in 1897. Thereafter he was successively assistant to the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and, from 1926, Town Clerk. Throughout the war years his life was one of unceasing work, and there is no doubt that the harmony which prevailed in all public departments of the city's government and the good relations existing between it and other local government bodies and with the ministerial centres in London owed much to this suave, courteous and understanding public servant. Permanent officials, both local and central, found him always kind and helpful, and it was

with a sense of personal loss that they and the city at large heard of his untimely death on 17 January 1945. Josiah Green died as he had lived, consecrated to the service of his native city, borne down at last, when victory was in sight, by the crushing burdens of war.

On 21 April, when the German collapse was imminent, Mr. Churchill paid his second wartime visit and his reception was tumultuous. He himself confessed that he was much moved by the warmth of feeling and friendship with which he was acclaimed. "If I were not a hardened warrior," he declared in his speech of thanks for the freedom of the city which had just been conferred upon him, "it would have made me blush." He went on to remind his hearers that, though the end of the German war was near, the Japanese were still in the field and must be defeated. So there could not be much time for rejoicing. In looking forward to the future he said, "The Merchant Venturers must never lose their daring and ingenuity, and then you will be able in generations and centuries to come, to celebrate the long acquired fame of Bristol. And in the pages of that history those that record your bearing, your fortitude, your endurance and your resolution in this great war will not be among the least worthy." At the University, he conferred honorary degrees on Mr. Ernest Bevin and Mr. A. V. Alexander, both Bristolians, two colleagues that had stood by him faithfully for so long, and he delivered his final wartime speech in the city. He recalled how on the last occasion on which he had visited the University, nearby buildings were still in flames, and how the officers of the University had come to the ceremony with their robes put on over the khaki in which they had been working all night. The hall where they were now gathered, from which all the glory of panelling and decoration had gone, still showed its scarred walls and, with its temporary roof, bore witness to the conflagration that had occurred there. In the University, as at the Council House, he was deeply touched by the welcome he was given. Later, in a letter to the Lord Mayor, he said: "My two visits to Bristol in the war will ever remain linked in my memory, the first in the dark days and the second on the threshold of victory."

V-E Day was celebrated with considerable gusto, especially by the young, but the rejoicings were of necessity more subdued

than those that had occurred on 11 November 1918. For almost 150 years it had been customary to proclaim the accession of new monarchs or the conclusion of war at a number of different places in the city, but the choice of these varied a good deal. In May 1945 the Lord Mayor, Alderman W. F. Cottrell, accompanied by the Sheriff, Under-Sheriff and Swordbearer, read the proclamation from the Proclamation Coach at the cross roads outside the Council House in Corn Street, at Old Market, the Horsefair, the Cenotaph and College Green. On V-J Day he took the same route, with a police escort and three boy scouts holding aloft the City Standard. The buglers of the Sea Cadets and the N.F.S. Band preceded the flag-decorated cars in which rode the Lady Mayoress and six former Lord Mayors in their scarlet robes.

So the war was over, and Bristol, battered but unbowed, prepared to face the challenging years of peace.

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